

# Approaches: Drugs and Ecstatic Intoxication – Ernst Jünger

## *Skulls and reefs*

### 1

“Where did you find so many stories, Master Ludovico?” This is more or less what Cardinal Hippolytus of Este said to his protégé, Ariosto, after having read *Orlando Furioso*.

Along with Byron’s poetry, *Orlando Furioso* was among the favorites of my youth. My first encounter with this book took place when I was fourteen or fifteen years old, specifically the impressive edition illustrated by Doré. It was translated by Hermann Kurz. I was not so pleased with the later translation by Gries that was published by Reclam. I read it in the spring of 1917 at the Siegfried Line and I came home with both volumes. I think that during the two wars I read more than at other times; many others have had the same experience.

Reading Ariosto is dangerous, as Cervantes already knew. In general, literary culture lays down rules that should not really be obeyed; the playing field is far too large. The sceptical question posed by Hippolytus is not just the kind of question a Cardinal would ask; it is also a question of cardinal importance. I have often reflected on it, even while I was writing this book. Endless questions arise about why I do this or that, or why I did this or that—and about what kind of answer should be given to such questions. And we ask ourselves these questions out of a sense of responsibility.

### 2

We hardly need to fear that the swine of Epicurus, as they used to say, will break into the poppy and hemp gardens. The Epicurean is not inclined to excess: it would interfere with pleasure. He enjoys time and things and therefore represents instead the opposite of the addict who suffers from the passage of time. He has nothing in common with the chain-smoker; he is more like the sybarite who concludes a good meal with a Cuban cigar. He is the master of pleasure and knows how to moderate it, not so much from subjection to discipline as from the love of pleasure itself.

There have been old Chinamen who similarly allowed themselves to smoke a bowl of opium now and then, and such people still exist today. It is as if, after a hearty banquet, one were not only to take a stroll on the terrace or a walk in the park, but were to extend the circle of time and space and therefore the field of the possible. This yields more than food and drink, and even more than wine and good cigars; it leads much further.

In this sense, after a certain age, perhaps when you retire, you are supposed to refuse to be restricted to certain boundaries. Those who are approaching the boundless must set

very distant frontiers. At that age, not everyone can do what the elderly Faust did; however, each person is clearly in charge of drafting plans for the vastness.

This applies, above all, to the period that is closest to the *ultima linea rerum*, when the latter presents itself with the greatest insistence. There are old vintners who live for months and even years on nothing but bread and wine. Konrad Weis has paid homage to their lives.

It is natural to alleviate the pain of the dying person whose time is running out, but that is not enough. It is our duty to approach; for the last time, the bed-ridden man, alone, the wealth of the world.

During those last moments, it is not enough to administer narcotics; rather, what we need are gifts that expand consciousness and make it more acute. If one harbors even the slightest suspicion that such gifts might hasten the passage of the stricken person—and there are reasons to believe that this might be the case—then one must be wary. It is this possibility that necessarily gives rise to the conjecture that there are certain qualities that are inherent to this kind of passage.

On the borders of this assumption, the experience of individual death possesses for many people enough value for them not to allow themselves to be deceived: for the captain it is a question of honor to be the last man to abandon ship. In fact, it is possible that with the administration of painkillers one not only eliminates the pain that accompanies death, but also its euphoria. Perhaps, in one's last conscious thoughts as one is extinguished, important messages are concealed; transmissions, receptions. Death masks reveal a reflection of these messages.

The plumage of the rooster of Aesculapius is many-colored.

### 3

We must contemplate, beyond pleasure, the spiritual adventure, whose enchantments are imposed on the consciousness of the highest and most refined culture. Basically, all enjoyment is spiritual; that is where the inexhaustible wellsprings emerge that give rise to every kind of unrest and anxiety, so that no satisfaction is ever really good enough.

Every advertiser is familiar with this connection. When we receive our seed catalogues in the winter, their images trigger a more intense pleasure than the flowers that will bloom in the summer flowerbeds. So, too, in nature, more cleverness and more artifice is wasted on seduction than on the fulfillment of the ultimate purpose. This is demonstrated by the designs on the wings of a butterfly or the plumage of a Bird of Paradise.

Spiritual hunger is insatiable; physical gain has narrow limits. If a Roman glutton like Vitellius devoured three large meals each day and rid himself of excess food by vomiting, this is because he suffered from having eyes that were bigger than his stomach, even if in a primitive way. The relation of disproportionality has its own scale: and so, too, does the

faculty of sight that summons the spirit to its aid when it is not satisfied by the visible world.

Saint Anthony was more capable of enjoyment than Vitellius and his kind; he was capable of enjoying not so much a more solid *physis* or more wealth, as a higher kind of spirituality. In Flaubert's *Temptations*, imaginary banquets are depicted, full of the most alluring delicacies resplendent with the most striking colors, as if they had been created by gardeners or master chefs, or even artists. In his hut in the desert, Anthony beheld the source of all abundance; there it took direct shape as a phenomenon. That is why the ascetic is richer than Caesar, the master of the visible world, who consumes himself in pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4

I tried to depict the type of the spiritual adventurer in the character of Antonio Peri:

“At first sight, Antonio was hardly to be distinguished from the other artisans that one often saw busy at work throughout Heliopolis. Behind this surface appearance, however, something different was concealed: he was a hunter of dreams. He hunted dreams the way others caught butterflies in nets. On Sundays and holidays he did not go to the islands, nor did he frequent the taverns on the waterfront at Pagos. He closed himself off in his studio and withdrew to the land of dreams. He said that all the unknown countries and undiscovered islands were woven into the tapestry there. He used drugs as a key to enter the chambers and grottoes of that world.

“He also drank wine, but it was never pleasure that he was after. He was essentially driven to do so by a mixture of a thirst for adventure and a thirst for knowledge. He did not travel to settle in unknown regions, but as a geographer. Wine was merely one key among many others, one of the main doors to the labyrinth.

“Perhaps it was only his method that allowed him to navigate waters sown with catastrophes and nightmares. He had many run-ins with such obstacles. He was of the conviction that every drug contained a formula that granted access to certain enigmas of the universe. He also thought that it was possible to decipher the hierarchy of these formulas. The highest keys must reveal the secrets of the universe.

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning the temptations of Saint Anthony and their relation to ecstatic intoxication, the visionary faculty, abstinence and the desert, see the interesting discussion in [Ernst Jünger's] *La Tijera* [*Die Schere*: The Scissors], translated by Andrés Sánchez Pascual, Tusquets Editores (Ensayo 18), Barcelona, 1993, pp. 40-42. [This and all the following footnotes were added to the text by the Spanish translator, except text in brackets and where otherwise noted—American translator's note.]

“He was looking for the master key. However, isn’t the supreme mystery necessarily lethal?”<sup>2</sup>

That the constant quest for adventure, for remote and unusual places, meant something very different would not be revealed until the end of his path. Antonio fell into a radioactive net, and was mortally injured, and suffered serious burns. In the throes of his agonies he refused morphine. It was not pleasure that led him to undertake his journeys, nor was it adventure. Yes, he felt curiosity, but it was a sublimated curiosity, one that was waiting to arrive at just the right door. Once upon that threshold one does not need any key: it opens by itself.

## 5

Every enjoyment lives thanks to the spirit. And every adventure lives thanks to the proximity of death, around which the adventurer revolves.

I am reminded of a painting that I saw when I had just learned to read, a painting entitled, *The Adventurer*: a sailor, a lone *conquistador*, had just come ashore on an unknown island. Before him, a terrible mountain arose, and his ship had foundered. He is alone.

That is more or less how the painting depicted the scene. “The Adventurer” was, at the time, one of those famous paintings that was always surrounded by a knot of admirers at expositions. A model of the pictorial art of a literary inspiration, which culminated in Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* (1882).

The taste for this kind of work has been lost; today, this painting would lie in some dusty corner, if it has even been preserved. It was of a symbolic character: the ship from which the man had disembarked, the beach with his footprints, the colors that inspired fear and hope. Böcklin was more profound; in the meantime, however, Munch has treated the same theme from a different perspective. Now, an entirely different solution is once again offered. Now we possess masterpieces where the proximity of death is not the object of description, but instead impregnates the whole atmosphere.

I can only clearly recall a few details about that adventurer: the sand was strewn with the bones and skulls of those who had failed in their attempt to perform the same mission. I understood this and also drew the lesson that the painter had sought to convey: that rising up to this level was undoubtedly seductive, but also dangerous. They are nothing less than the bones of his predecessors, of his ancestors and, when all is said and done, they are his own bones, too. They are the shroud on the beach of time. When we are washed up on this beach by the waves, when we come ashore, we walk on these bones.

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<sup>2</sup> Antonio Peri, one of the protagonists of the utopian novel, *Heliopolis* (1948), the uncle of the heroine Budur Peri, who, in the chapter entitled, “The Night of the Laurel”, would initiate the commander Lucius de Geer into the secrets of a highly psychoactive substance. See the Spanish translation by Marciano Villanueva: *Heliópolis*, Seix Barral, Barcelona, 1981.

Adventure is a concentrated form of life; we hyperventilate, we are brushed by the wind of death.

## 6

The skull and crossbones was a legitimate symbol for many years, not only in crypts and cemeteries, but also in art. Particularly in Baroque Art, it constituted, along with the hourglass and the sickle, a favorite theme. Today it would be primitive to employ it in this sense; its import has been reduced to that of a traffic sign. Even when the painter of *The Adventurer* embodied it in an image, he succumbed to the temptation of indulging in a literary allusion.

This poses the following question: how is it possible that an object such as the skull and crossbones was employed in the past as a theme of high art and, as such, it is nonetheless clear to us today that this same object, in the eyes of our contemporaries, no longer moves us, and is even comical?

It must be pointed out that any object can acquire symbolic power, and also lose it. It plays a role analogous to that of the point of view from which the eye grasps its object. If this point of view is characterized by sound judgment, the radiance of the object will be communicated to the point of view. And this radiance persists, as in the images of old, “its light shines regardless of the passage of time”. Not only has the beauty of the object in question been transferred, but so, too, has a reflection of the imperishable. Aphrodite was not just an allegorical theme in the figure of the lover, but was also represented in the embrace and became anonymous.

Today, we are still deeply moved by the death’s head depicted by the old masters. In it, in its empty eye sockets, one can behold death. It was something that was communicated to the atoms.

On the other hand, the skull and crossbones of the “adventurer” is purely accessory. Here a symbol, there an ornament; here a myth, there an allegory. On one hand an approach, on the other a distancing.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the contemporary painter, even from the purely pictorial perspective, does not achieve the mastery of the classics, regardless of how much renown he may have in his field as an artistic technician. The concordance and the sense of well-being that is created between the spectator and the work of art, for whose glory the artist lives, is rapidly dissipated. The poor artist was, without even knowing it, a counterfeiter. The bogus banknote is confidently accepted, but sooner or later everyone finds out that it is worthless. The check is drawn on insufficient funds: on the one hand the outward claim of the piece of paper, on the other, the gold that backs it up; on the one hand, the appearance, on the other, the reality.

Banknotes can often deceive us; few are the experts who can instantly perceive a fake by holding the note up to the light. “Holding it up to the light” means, in certain cases, that one recognizes that there is nothing hidden behind it.

## 7

The idea that we might be impressed by a skull became absurd when x-rays became routine facts of life. This is not so much an observation about physics or optics, as it is about the fundamental point of view, that is, a new mode of human sight, an almost instinctive mode, corresponding to the genesis of man. X-rays arise as an empirical consequence, conditioned by the change of the form.

This fundamental change that can be noted in physics and its instruments not only possesses a higher level, at which the air becomes rarified, but also deeper layers where matter becomes more dense and suggestive. Physics explores both levels.

What is more important, however, is the fact that in this way the relation to death also changes, and this change calls for expression not only in faith and thought, but also in art. This is, furthermore, one of the reasons why the skull and crossbones has lost, like so many other things, its symbolic “credibility”.

These questions pertain to perspective rather than substance. The power of the skull is “in itself” intact, but it no longer serves any purpose to look through it. Apart from that, one must bear in mind that we are participating in a global process of erosion of symbols.<sup>3</sup> Very few powers will offer any resistance: perhaps only Mothers.

Art must take this into account and it is in fact doing so: above all, *ex negativo*, with sensitive antennae. The devaluation of the classic symbols is a trait that is inherent to every change in style. In the meantime, in the Great Transition, not only are isolated symbols at stake, but so is the symbolic world in general. This point was emphasized in the discussion of the process of whitening in *At the Wall of Time*.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, it must not

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<sup>3</sup> *Symbolschwund*: “erosion of symbols”. The concepts of erosion (*Schwund*) or reduction (*Reduktion*) are fundamental for the understanding of the Jüngerian reflection on nihilism and technics. *Reduktion* designates the active side of the process of the extension of nihilism on a planetary scale, of the process of “bleaching” or “whitening”, while *Schwund* refers to the result, i.e.: personal states of existential vacuity, states of ontological extinction that affect the essential and symbolic reserves of tradition as well as the reserves of nature, which threaten to annihilate meaning (and) life [the “forest” and the “jungle”] under the power of nothingness [the “desert”]. This semantic constellation explicitly evokes *Über die Linie* [Over the Line]; but it is also present in *Der Waldgang* [The Forest Rebel] [in English: Ernst Jünger, *The Forest Passage*, tr. Thomas Frieze, Telos Press, Candor, N.Y., 2013] and *At the Wall of Time*.

<sup>4</sup> *An der Zeitmauer* [At the Wall of Time] (1959) is one of the most relevant essays of the post-war era in which Jünger offers a diagnosis of the era from a metahistorical perspective. On the concept of “bleaching” or “whitening” (*Weissung*), see note 3 above.

be interpreted as a nihilist act, but as a *retour offensif*. White is not colorless, but the refuge from the chromatic world.

## 8

Returning to our example, let us imagine one of those impressive limestone cliffs that loom over the French Riviera or the verdant grasslands of the valley of the Danube. Or we could think of the cliffs composed of Cretaceous rock on the coast of Rügen or the coral reefs in the Pacific ocean.

In these places, death no longer stands out as the pallor of an isolated skull, but by virtue of its incredible sedimentation. In the past all of this was the structural skeleton of life: snails and clams, the shells of diatoms, corals that had been deposited for thousands of years before reaching the highest degrees of fossilization. Forms incubated in the seas of the primordial world, forged even more distinctly by geological pressure or destroyed when that pressure became a little too great. Then the process of dissolution begins again with the impact of the ocean surf and the rock is distilled into the molecules that once again fall prey to life and once again come alive in circles, spirals and symmetries.

A game played in the limestone mirror, but one with many possible players. The carboniferous forest accumulated, shot through with mineral deposits, and the energy it absorbed from the sun is exhaled in the fires of the technological world. These changes took place over eons, like the ice crystals formed at the verge of the freezing point, which, whether they melt or crystallize, are like images in a mirror.

All of this lies dormant in the limestone cliffs, waiting for art to instill it with life.

## 9

Access to a new relation to death is in the process of being achieved. This is more important than all the feats of the world of technology. A Great Transition.

Not only is the limestone cliff alive, but so is the desert. Moses knew this. It was proven by the incident where he struck the rock with his staff and caused a spring of water to burst forth, and his staff turned into a serpent. There is a thirst for this water in our deserts, too. Those who thirst are legion. And this thirst increases when the human being is overwhelmed.

One will soon get the impression that the State, the “dragon with a thousand scales”, is the only creature that lives in the desert, and populates it with its illusions. Dreams possess the most exclusive monopoly; priests have known this since time immemorial.

## 10

It is considered to be the privilege of the gods to dwell in the world of images and to descend to the world of phenomena only on exceptional occasions. Then, they shine like rainbows.<sup>5</sup>

As for us, we have been conceded a lesser share of this gift. We get a glimpse of the richness of the world from the images with their refracted colors and, on the rarest occasions, it happens the way it does in dreams, we escape from the visible world of phenomena in order to penetrate into the universe of the imagination.

As a native of a landlocked country, I knew the sea only by hearsay and, upon seeing it for the first time, I was not impressed by its waves. Only when I almost drowned in the undertow, did it overawe me like a giant; you could say that up until then, whether it was choppy or calm, everything was just a stage backdrop and only then did the show really begin. Hokusai painted waves like these. That is how you must look at the limestone cliff.

When the “black”, concerning whom I will provide more information below, deflowered his girlfriend and asked her how she liked it, she responded: “I had imagined it would be more beautiful”. This must be the rule, even if you do not like it.

Crime, too, has imaginary attractions. A bank robbery, like the ones that are depicted in novels or the movies, can seduce intellects with a taste for clever decoys and bold decisions in which a plan must be executed precisely to the second. In practice, unforeseen events and annoying setbacks supervene. After Raskolnikov used an axe to dispatch the old usurer who, according to him, was worth less than a bedbug, in the hallway he ran into her devoted sister, to whom he meted out the same fate, for lack of a better idea.

There can be no doubt that one of the more alluring aspects of the novel consists in abstracting the imaginary part of the crime from the blame for committing it. The sentence was merciful if one reflects on the fact that the crime consisted of a double murder, carried out, furthermore, in the most vicious manner, “with an axe”. It seemed scandalous to the other prisoners; they thought that the “young master” had been treated with kid gloves.

## 11

Ecstatic intoxication also knows disillusionment. This disillusionment necessarily takes the form not so much of a relation between guilt and expiation, as in the framework of a

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<sup>5</sup> An allusion to a famous verse from the second part of *Faust*. After waking up from a good night’s sleep in the fresh air of nature, Faust observes the iridescent reflections of a foaming waterfall and interprets it symbolically: “There the efforts of mankind they mirror. / Reflect on it, you’ll understand precisely: / We live our life amongst refracted colour.” [English translation from: <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/German/FaustIIActIScenesItoVII.htm>—American translator’s note].



more comprehensive bookkeeping in which guilt and expiation also undoubtedly play a role. Ecstatic intoxication and transgression are closely related phenomena and sometimes it is hard to separate them, especially in their borderline forms.

In ecstatic intoxication, whether it has the effect of a narcotic or a stimulant, time is consumed in advance, one handles it differently, and it is used on credit. It has to be paid back; high tide is followed by low tide, colors by pallor, the world turns grey and tedious.

This may even apply to physiology and psychology, despite the fact that, with respect to these fields, catastrophes are already looming. It is possible that at the same time a Promethean theft of light and image will supervene, a penetration into the home of the gods. There, too, time exists, even if the steps that are taken are more powerful and longer and leave indelible tracks. And dangers exist there, too; the maxim, "Once, I lived like the gods", comes at a price.<sup>6</sup>

## 12

My self-imposed deadline for addressing this topic is rapidly approaching, and perhaps has already expired. Its fabric is woven with an essay that I dedicated to Mircea Eliade on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday ("Drugs and Ecstasy", 1968).<sup>7</sup> A second part was supposed to address extraordinary experiences; but it split in different directions. It could be included in a more distinct system and I am thinking of doing so in the form of a recurring series of concepts; for the reader it is more convenient to follow the text as it exists, page by page.

The topic could be expanded, but not exhausted; this is suggested by its very title. The latter refers to all unexpected events, especially the progress of art and life in general. My real task was not intended to be so much to write a book as to construct an artifact, a vehicle from which one departs as a different person from the one who boarded it. This also applies to the author: meditations *ad usum proprium*, for his own orientation. The reader may participate according to his tastes or his needs.

### ***Drugs and ecstasy***

*Qu'elle soit remassée pour "le bien" ou pour "le mal", la mandragore est crainte et respectée comme une plante miraculeuse.... En elle sont renfermées des forces extraordinaires, que peuvent multiplier la vie ou donner la mort. En une certaine mesure donc, la mandragore est 'l'herbe de la vie et de la mort'.*

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<sup>6</sup> "Einmal lebt ich wei Götter": Hölderlin's words, which Jünger repeatedly quotes in this and in other works, when he meditates on ecstasy and the limits of all approaches. See Ernst Jünger, *Die Schere* [The Scissors].

<sup>7</sup> See Ernst Jünger, "Drugs and Ecstasy", in *Myths and Symbols: Studies in Honor of Mircea Eliade*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969 [American translator's note].

13

The influence of drugs is ambivalent: they can affect action and contemplation; the will and intuition. These two powers, which seem to be mutually exclusive, are frequently provoked by the same means, as anyone who has ever observed a gathering of drinkers knows.

It is true that it is problematic to decide whether or not to include alcoholic beverages among drugs in the strict sense of the word. Perhaps their primordial power has been domesticated during millennia of enjoyment. Myths have passed down to us a more powerful image, and also a more disturbing one, in which Dionysius appears as the master of the festival, with his retinue of satyrs, *sileni*, maenads and wild beasts.

The god's triumphal cortege advances from the opposite direction to that of Alexander: from India, by way of the Near East, towards Europe; and his conquests are more lasting. Just like Adonis, Dionysius is recognized as the founder of orgiastic festivals, whose periodic celebrations are profoundly interwoven with the historical world and were intimately connected with a hedonistic cult of the phallus. The latter was not part of the official content of the Dionysian religions, but was one of the revelations that confirmed the mystery and its irresistible power. Compared to this, as an ancient author pointed out, "the festivals in honor of Aphrodite in Cythera could be described as innocent children's games".

This primordial power of wine has since diminished; we see it return in a watered-down form in the fall and spring festivals in the wine-producing countries. Only on exceptional occasions does it erupt in the exaltation of the joy of life, of colors, melodies and grotesque images, a remnant of the ancient world of the mystery religions, with its disturbing power of contagious attraction. Archaic traits emerge in faces, capering and dances. Above all, the masquerade, the symbol of the "upside-down world", is characteristic of these rites.

By comparing the victories of Alexander and Dionysius, we also touch upon the difference between historical power and elemental power. Historical successes, like the conquest of Babylonia, for instance, are ephemeral and connected to certain names. The instant does not return under this form; it constitutes a link in the chain of historical time. For transformations within the elemental world, however, neither names nor dates are of any importance, but nonetheless always recur, not only below the surface of historical time, but also within historical time: They erupt like lava from beneath the earth's crust.

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<sup>8</sup> "Whether it is gathered 'for good' or 'for evil', the mandrake is an object of fear and respect as a miraculous plant.... Extraordinary powers are concealed within it, which can intensify life or give death. Thus, the mandrake is in a way 'the plant of life and death'."

Take wine, for example: Alexander was forced to retreat from India, while Dionysius still reigns as the anonymous master of the festival. Wine has transformed Europe more radically than the sword. Even today, it is still considered to be a means to bring about the metamorphoses of religious worship.

The exchanges of new poisons and ecstatic intoxications, and even of vices, fevers and diseases, lack precise dates, thanks to which a coronation or a decisive battle are engraved in our memories. These exchanges remain in the darkness and in the snarl of the roots. We can make guesses about their antecedents, but we cannot measure their scope or penetrate into their depths.

When Cortés came ashore in Mexico, it was an event that for the Europeans had a place in the order of the historical world, while for the Aztecs it belonged to the magical world. In Mexico, the dream is even more powerful than the consciousness of the waking world, the omen is more conclusive than the word. In such incidents of contact, images were exchanged as in a game played with mirrors, which is understood either as grace, or as guilt and expiation. Thus, in the sacrifice: on the one side Montezuma, on the other Maximilian, both Emperors of Mexico. Under the surface, germs, images and dreams are given and taken in an exchange that annihilates some races and enriches others, but whose activity is beyond the reach of exact descriptions and chronologies.

## 14

Even when they are precise, statistical data can only extract numbers from a problem. Nor can they even touch upon the problem in its deepest layer; it remains, in the literal sense of the term, as the object of controversy. This is particularly true of those fields that touch upon the psyche, as well as all behavior, including that of animals, and it is also quite applicable to our topic: drugs and ecstatic intoxication.

Thus, to mention at this point one of the greatest gifts that America gave to Europe, tobacco, a corpus of very precise figures has been compiled concerning the relation between nicotine and a wide range of diseases. Such data belong to the domain of the economy; in order to concede any value to them, however, it is necessary to have already accepted the concept of “utility” upon the basis of which these data have been gathered.

In this case, the utility is of a health-related nature. From another perspective, however, smoking might entail a certain kind of profit: the word “enjoy” already suggests as much. One might think of the tranquility it infuses into a conversation, or of how a tedious period of time is abbreviated or how a time of sadness is ameliorated, or how it enhances association with others in times of happiness. Every act of concentration, but also every act of dissipation, must be paid for. Is the pleasure worth the price? This is where the root of the problem lies, and statistics can only provide data. It is the question posed to every smoker by each cigarette he smokes.

Statistics only corroborate a fact that has been known since time immemorial: drugs are dangerous. Anyone who takes them also takes a risk, one that is all the more serious the

less it is considered in advance. In this respect, when it is a matter of comparing profits and losses, the statistical method naturally has its value.

## 15

If we have mentioned wine and tobacco, it is because it is advisable to start from familiar magnitudes in the measurement of the possible. Both pertain to our real theme only marginally. The more rigorously we delimit the definition of “drug”, the less likely it will be that these two products will fall under that heading. For Baudelaire, wine, like opium and hashish, opens the doors to artificial paradises. The lover of wine is right to disdain to view wine as a drug. He would also prefer that vintners and grape farmers should be the ones who make wine, rather than chemists and manufacturers. Even today, from the cultivation of the vine to the renaissance of the grape in grocery stores, gardeners and artisans are still painstakingly devoted to the art of wine; even today, it is perceived as a divine gift with a marvelous power of metamorphosis. The blood of the earth placed on the same level with the blood of the gods.

If one wants to view wine as a drug, this would only be one assertion among others, such as, for example, one could make concerning any alcoholic beverage. Tobacco seems to be closer to the world of drugs. Nicotine offers a glimpse of the possibilities contained in the sphere of the alkaloids. The sacrifices of smoke that are offered every day all over the planet announce the defeat of gravity, the spiritual liberation of the great dreams of levitation. Compared, however, with the magical power of opium, it is only capable of contributing to a minor increase in elevation, a mild euphoria.

## 16

Like many etymological explanations, the interpretation of the word “drug” is also unsatisfactory. Its origins are obscure. Just like the word “alcohol”, it is in part derived from Hispano-Arabic, as well as medieval Latin, roots. The origins of the Dutch word *drog*, dry, is more plausible. These drugs were substances that came from many different countries and were sold in herbalists’ shops and pharmacies and were used by doctors, cooks and merchants in the perfume and spice trades. From time immemorial, the word has had connotations of mystery, with hints of magic, and, in particular, of being of oriental origin.

In our context, a “drug” is a substance that causes ecstatic intoxication. Whatever form it takes, it has to entail something specific that takes place to distinguish this substance from others that are used in medicine or for pure pleasure. This specific factor must not be sought in the substance, but in the purpose, for both medicines as well as means of pleasure can be employed as intoxicating drugs in this more strict sense of the word.

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shakespeare speaks of the “common dream” and he distinguishes it from a more intense magical condition. The former brings dreams; the latter brings visions and prophecies. Similarly, the intoxication caused by drugs produces particular effects that are hard to define. Anyone who aspires to experience this

intoxication is motivated by their own particular reasons. And anyone who uses the word “drug” in this sense takes it for granted that his reader or his listener will share his views on the matter in a way that is not definable *more geometrico*. With them, he crosses over into a border zone.

## 17

Infusions and concentrates, concoctions and elixirs, powders and pills, salves, pastes and resins can be used in this particular sense. The substance can be solid, fluid, moist or gaseous; it can be eaten, drunk, applied to the skin, inhaled, smoked, snorted or injected.

To provoke states of intoxication one needs not only a particular substance, but also a certain quantity and concentration of the substance. The dose can be insignificant or excessive: in the first case it does not lead beyond sobriety; in the second case it leads to unconsciousness. As one becomes habituated to a drug, as everyone knows, it becomes increasingly more difficult to maintain a course between the two extremes: on the one side looms depression; on the other, overdose. The price exacted for pleasure is always increasing. This entails the following choice: retreat or go to the bottom.<sup>9</sup>

When the drug’s effect diminishes, one can increase the dose or the concentration. This is what happens to the smoker or the drinker who, at first, increases his usual level of consumption and only later proceeds to stronger kinds of smoke or drink. And this also demonstrates that pure pleasure no longer satisfies him. A third possibility resides in the modification of the frequency of use: in the transition from instances of excess on extraordinary or festive occasions, to an everyday habit.

In the third case, it is not the dose that is increased, but the inclination to use the drug. The smoker who imposes upon himself the discipline of being content with one cigarette in the morning will be forced to pay the price, when he attains an intensity of pleasure that up until that time, despite much heavier consumption, had always remained alien to him. A circumstance that once again contributes to temptation.

## 18

Some people are extremely sensitive and the dose of a drug can be correspondingly small, and even minute. Since the time of Hahnemann we have known that even microscopic traces of a substance can be psychoactive, and this has been confirmed by modern chemistry. But along with the right formula, one also needs a receptive disposition. This is how homeopathic medicines can be of use to some people; they presuppose a homeopathic behavior. A suggestion is enough for the sensitive subject. This is a universal law that is valid not only for the field of health but also for ways of life in general. On the other hand, the old saying is true: “There is an axe for every tree”.

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<sup>9</sup> As on other occasions, Jünger is playing with the double meaning of *zugrunde gehen*, that is, “to perish” or “to go to the bottom”.

The dose can therefore be minimal. Likewise, under certain circumstances, certain substances that are usually thought to be neutral, like the air we breathe, can intoxicate. It is upon this hypothesis that Jules Verne's *Doctor Ox's Experiment* is based. On the pretext of wanting to build a factory to produce manufactured gas, Doctor Ox changed the state of mind of the inhabitants of a provincial city, intoxicating them by supplying them with pure oxygen. Thus, concentration transforms a substance that we breathe every day into a poison. As Paracelsus said: "*Sola dosis facit venenum*."

Doctor Ox distilled air. We can assume that for sensitive natures, air can itself be intoxicating. And so it is. Few indeed are those human beings who, at least with respect to certain moments, would not agree with Goethe's saying: "Youth is drunkenness without wine." It is of course true that in order to experience this feeling one needs that intact disposition which is one of the distinctive traits of youth. However, external factors are always also involved, whether these factors are "stronger varieties" of familiar substances, or unfamiliar substances, or atmospheric influences. In novels we find rhetorical flourishes such as: "The air was like wine." "Ineffable serenity" bursts forth from quasi-immaterial springs.

Even so, the perfect moment can also give rise to melancholy. The latter often possesses an admonitory and dissuasive power and, by virtue of this property, is no less favorable, for in this way it often announces the approach of imminent dangers. Alongside perceptions that are as hard to explain as they are to dispute, there are many others that are justified only by the enhancement of sensitivity. In his *Voyage aux régions équinoxiales*, Alexander von Humboldt undertook a detailed accounting of the phenomena that preceded volcanic eruptions and earthquakes and, in this context, addressed that state of nervous unease that, in humans and animals, acts as an omen and as perception.

## 19

To this very day, people have never ceased to attempt to isolate some kind of psychogenic substance or force from the atmosphere. Thus, for example, on the basis of magnetism, Mesmer believed he identified a "fluid" that emanated from the human body and that could be stored in certain objects that would act like batteries. Mesmerism was never more than a passing fashion in the medical arts; its influence, however, has survived in poetic fantasy. E.T.A. Hoffmann was particularly fascinated by it. He eagerly awaited Mesmer's doctoral dissertation. *De planetarum influxu* could have been the title of an essay by Novalis, not unlike the articles published in the *Athenäum*.

Less well-known, but no less relevant than Mesmer, is Carl-Ludwig von Reichenbach, who distinguished himself not only as a natural philosopher, but also as a geologist, chemist and industrialist. Reichenbach claimed to have discovered in the *od*<sup>10</sup> a substance

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Ott's dictionary includes the entry, "odylic", which he defines as follows: "Pertaining to what is known as 'animal magnetism' or the spirit. Derivations: *Ody*l,

whose energy or radiation was comparable to Mesmer's fluid. Although it exists throughout all of nature, this *od* can only be perceived by beings of a delicate organization whom Reichenbach called sensitives or, in exceptional cases of heightened sensitivity, hypersensitives.

Reichenbach, whose personality reconciled the gifts of the natural philosopher with the precision of the physical sciences, sought to prove experimentally the existence of the *od* and, in his attempt to do so, he used sensitive types the way a near-sighted person uses eyeglasses. With this purpose in mind, he carried out procedures that we would today call *tests*,<sup>11</sup> without of course resorting to any mechanical apparatus, but with very subtle differences. Thus, for example, he excluded from the category of sensitives all those persons who did not sense any thermal difference between the round end and the pointed end of a chicken egg held up between two fingers. Reichenbach dared to venture into regions that, without being either distant or easily accessible, are inaccessible to those with dull senses.

Physicists, however, paid just as little attention to the *od* as the psychiatrists and neurologists paid to the sensitives. As a scientist, Reichenbach was annoyed by this lack of interest, but as a philosopher he knew that he had to remain dispassionate. He had arrived with his ideas in the least favorable era that could be imagined. This untimeliness was even more applicable to the case of Fechner, who saw the physical-mathematical image of the world as the "dark side" of the universe, and his "psycho-physics" owed a great deal to the writings of Reichenbach.

Fechner's ideas on the animate nature of the celestial bodies and plants could only be suppressed in a time when mechanistic theories were generating discoveries at an unprecedented rate. In the field of medicine, the way was being paved for a massive positivism, whose *hubris* led a certain surgeon to boast that he had never seen any souls during his operations.

Such antitheses within the realm of intuition suggest the idea that the spirit is active in two different wings of a building, between which there is no door. One may also think of a double mirror whose two surfaces are separated by an opaque layer. There will once again be eras that approach the unity of intuition. This unity will not be achieved absolutely, since both the physical-mathematical image of the world, as well as the natural philosophy of Fechner and Reichenbach, are only different aspects of the "inside of nature".

## 20

The dose capable of intoxicating a person can therefore be minimal when the person is sufficiently predisposed for the experience. In this respect, as well, there are particularly

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*Odyle, Odylically, Odylicism, Odylicization, Odylicize.*" See Jonathan Ott, *The Age of Entheogens & The Angel's Dictionary*, Natural Products Co., Kennewick, 1995, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> In English in the original [American translator's note].

susceptible sensitive types. The rules that the legislator is compelled to promulgate, for example, in the motor vehicle code, only offer a crude standard. This code will be made increasingly more strict, because with each passing day the empirical world provides us with new proofs of the fact that in the collision between intoxication and technology, two mutually exclusive powers are involved. In fact, this is true not only for drugs in general. Rather, the number of remedies increases endlessly and so does the field of their application. And so, too, do the number of jobs for which the indispensable automobile is not merely optional. The car has become a science in itself.

The predisposition to intoxication can be so pronounced that the subject may pursue a life of purity, without chemical products. This is a privilege reserved for the ascetic; his intimate relation with ecstasy has been well-known since the most remote times. In addition to abstinence, prayer and fasting, he avails himself of the solitude that never ceases to bestow power upon artists and sages. The flood of images in the Thebaid: televisions that do not need drugs, much less any equipment.

The thinker, the artist, who is in good form, experiences phases in which a new light glows. The world begins to speak and to respond to the spirit with boundless power. It is as if things were charged with energy; their beauty, their order that is overflowing with meaning, are revealed in a new light. This “being in good form” is independent of any physical well-being; it is in fact often opposed to physical well-being, as if a state of prostration is more conducive to the free flow of images flow than normal states of physical health. In any event, Reichenbach already warned against the error of confusing hypersensitivity with illness; with regard to the question that interests us, however, it is not very easy to avoid making this mistake. This is confirmed with particular force in the disputes in which conclusions concerning the psyche of an artist are drawn on the basis of his works. It is not by chance that it is precisely our epoch that should be so rich in such controversies. It is likely that these states of unprecedented predisposition to ecstatic intoxication precede not only productive phases in the life of the individual, but also stylistic changes within cultures. The latter necessarily produce a Babylonian confusion in the language of forms as well as in language in general.

## 21

Jung-Stilling characterizes this predisposition as “the gift of prophecy”, which he understands as a higher degree of receptivity, attainable thanks to a certain way of life. “But, in the end, a pure and devoted man can also, after long practice and peregrinations, attain to God in ecstasy and magnetic trance states”. According to him, “in its natural state, the soul works through the brain and the nerves; in its magnetic state it works without either”. Only after death does the human being acquire the full power of the prophetic dream, for then he has separated completely from the body, and this capacity is more perfect than the state he was able to attain to in life.

Those who, according to Jung-Stilling, are gifted with prophetic powers, more or less correspond to Reichenbach’s hypersensitives. In accordance with contemporary terminology we could interpret them as extremely rare, but constantly recurring, mutants.



The gift of prophecy can be cultivated, but its origin must be innate. Jung-Stilling thus sheds light on, among others, those cases in which admonitory dreams or revelations are not directly communicated to the person who is under threat, but to a third person who plays the role of receiver for the threatened person. This capacity need not be crowned with spiritual or ethical gifts; it can be manifested in a coarse or a refined existence. In the figure of Prince Myshkin, Dostoyevsky describes a highly developed type of admonitory gift that leads people to think that the person who expresses it is an idiot.

In biographies, whether ancient or modern, we constantly come across the figure of the sensitive who, before a fire, a bolt of lightning, or some other mishap, overwhelmed by an urgent sense of unease or distress, departs from his location, leaving other individuals who remain unperturbed.

States of excitation or meditation, like those of intoxication, can also flourish without the use of toxic substances. This possibility indicates that one can, by way of drugs, awaken forces that are greater than those of a specific intoxication. Ecstatic intoxication is a key that opens doors to kingdoms that are inaccessible to normal perception, but it is not the only such key.

To define the state to which one may aspire, the concept of ecstatic intoxication might be insufficient, unless it is extended to include diverse and even contrary phenomena. We shall therefore begin with the assertion that a drug acts both on one's will as well as on one's vision. Within this ambivalence there is an extensive range that in both senses leads to the loss of consciousness and finally to death. Drugs can be sought after as excitants and stimulants, or as soporifics, *narcotica* or *phantastica*;<sup>12</sup> they are used both for inducing narcosis as well as stimulation. Hasan Ibn Al-Sabbah, the Old Man of the Mountain, was familiar with this scale in all of its degrees. He led the *fedavis*, the initiates, who were later known as the *hashashins*, from the tranquility of artificial paradises to fury directed against princes and rulers. We do not find anything exactly like that in the morass of our technological world, but there are similar phenomena. They form part of the tendency of this technological world, both in the escape to oblivion as well as in kinetic intensification by way of stimulants.

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<sup>12</sup> A term coined by the German pharmacologist Lewin to classify the visionary substances. Jünger also includes under this rubric the psychedelic vehicles synthesized by Albert Hofmann, especially LSD and psilocybin, which were unknown to Lewin. The classification proposed by Louis Lewin in his book, *Phantastica* (1924) includes five sub-categories: 1) *Euphorica* (means to pacify the soul) such as opium, its derivatives (morphine, codeine and heroin) and cocaine; 2) *Phantastica* (hallucinogens): peyote, cannabis, amanita muscaria, nightshades, ayahuasca and others; 3) *Inebriantia* (substances based on ethyl groups) such as alcohol, chloroform and ether; 4) *Hypnotica* (soporifics): especially chloral hydrate and the kava plant; 5) *Excitantia* (stimulants): especially caffeine, tea, betel, khat, tobacco, cacao, mate and camphor. See Louis Lewin, *Phantastica. Die betäubenden und erregenden Genussmittel*, Georg Stilke, Berlin, 1924.

The legislator is obliged to simplify this complexity. He views intoxication as “the state caused by narcotics, especially intensive intoxication by ethyl products”. It is his job to decide whether, in each individual case, inebriation was or was not implicated in the commission of a crime or the failure to do something. And it is for this very reason hard to judge which state of consciousness triggered the punishable offense, since there are drugs that favor, at least temporarily, technical execution. In every epoch competitive athletes have been familiar with such drugs, but the border that separates illicit doping from authorized stimulation is uncertain.

New drugs are always coming on the market, drugs whose harmfulness is often only recognized when the damage has already been done. In other cases, the immediate harm is minimal, but the cumulative damage occurs over many years of use, often with fatal results. This is true of such stimulant drugs as tobacco and even for tranquilizers, such as the mild soporifics. We may also point out that the *stimulantia* and the *narcotica* are often used in combination with, or in opposition to each other. What goes up must come down. We may also think of weights on a balance: for each weight on one side of the scale, a counterweight is placed on the other side. In this way, one maintains an artificial equilibrium until, one day, the scale breaks.

## 23

The sober, indifferent spectator notes the aspect of movement in the spectacle of inebriation. In such a situation, one cannot ignore change; the latter is announced far and wide, through sound and vision. The words used to denote this state refer, at least in the wine- and beer-drinking countries, to immoderate libation or to exaggerated activity. Most are derived from the Latin *bibo* and *ebrius*, from the ancient High German *trinkan* and from the Gothic *drigkan*.

The German word *rauschen*, however, denotes lively movement, for example, like the fluttering of butterfly wings, which can also be perceived acoustically as “whispering” or “murmuring”. This movement may be very energetic: the Anglo-Saxon *rush* is one such example. It also suggests a vibrant and constantly increasing vitality. *Rauschzeit* denotes the mating season. It is said of the wild boar that during that season he is in rut. Insects and birds gather in swarms and flocks; immediately after the nuptial flight, termites lose their wings.<sup>13</sup>

Mating season is a time for forming flocks; human beings and animals group together. This fact alone allows us to obtain a better understanding of the active or volitional aspect

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<sup>13</sup> This passage contains a persistent and repeated pattern of alliteration between *Rausch* (inebriation or intoxication), *berauschen* (to become inebriated or ecstatic), *rauschen* (the babbling of a brook, rustling of papers, flapping of wings, murmuring of the wind or being in heat), *Geräusch* (noise or muttering), *rauschig* (rutting) and *schwärmen* (which also means to swarm, to fly while making a whirring noise, which is said not only of a flock of birds or a swarm of insects, but also of crowds, mobs and hordes).

of inebriation. The drunk is not afraid of company; he has a taste for the festive hustle and bustle and is not looking for solitude. He often behaves eccentrically, but he enjoys with respect to his behavior a greater license than a sober person would. It is more pleasing to see a smiling person than a sorrowful one. The drunk is viewed with benevolence, and is often considered to be a foe of tedium and depression. A messenger from Dionysius erupts to open the door to the world of festival. He even has a contagious effect on the sober person.

One must not disregard this exaggerated activity that has given its accent to the word “inebriation”. In most cases, the visible aspect of things demands a participation in language that is more relevant than the hidden part. The word “day” offers an example. When we say it, we also include the night. Therefore, the luminous side includes within itself the dark side. We hardly ever reflect on this point. In a completely analogous sense, the word “inebriation”, while it emphasizes the obvious exaggeration of the vital forces, also includes their torpor: the lethargic and indolent states, similar to daydreams and the condition of being half-asleep.

Inebriation is expressed in diverse and often opposed phenomena; drugs also cause diverse effects. They nonetheless complement one another in the framework of a vast all-encompassing whole. Hassan Ibn Al Sabbah had to lead his assassins with a single means, hashish, both to the world of beautiful dreams as well as to the world of criminal nightmares.

## 24

Someone who wants to tranquilize himself does something different from someone who seeks to become intoxicated in the visionary sense. He does not seek company, but solitude. This is closer to addiction; hence, he tries to conceal his habit, which lacks the festive quality of periodic celebrations. The “secret drinker” is viewed with suspicion.

Someone who tranquilizes himself regularly and profoundly, is compelled for that very reason to maintain secrecy, because the drug almost always comes from shady sources. His pleasure leads to a zone outside of the law. When such drugged individuals no longer fear to show themselves in public, it is a sign of imminent anarchy. Thus, after the First World War one could observe in the cafes drugged types with blank faces staring off into the void.

It is not just because that other people instill him with fear for various reasons that the narcotized individual avoids company. He is by his nature addicted to solitude; his essence is not of a communicative kind, but passive and receptive. It is as if he was lingering before a magic mirror, immobilized, entirely enclosed within his ego, and taking no pleasure in anything but that ego, whether as pure euphoria or as an imaginary world that engenders its own interior and reflects on him. Thus, there are lamps whose fluorescent light can transform a grey rock into a nugget of gold.

Baudelaire, who called hashish “a weapon for suicide”, mentions among its other effects the extraordinary cold that he felt after taking the drug, a pleasure that he includes in “the class of solitary pleasures”. This iciness, which is also caused by other *phantastica*,<sup>14</sup> is not of a physiological nature. It, too, constitutes a sign of solitude.

## 25

Narcissus was the son of a river god and a nymph, Liriope. His mother was fascinated by his beauty but also shocked by his cold attitude towards others. Concerned about the fate of her son, she sought the advice of Tiresias, the prophet, and received from his lips the following oracle: as long as he does not know himself, her son will enjoy a long life. This enigmatic prediction was fulfilled one day when, as he was returning home after hunting, Narcissus stopped to bend down to drink at a spring and saw his image reflected on the water. The adolescent was enamored with what he saw and was consumed with an insatiable desire for his own image, which led to his death. The gods transformed him into a flower with a soporific scent, the narcissus that still bears his name and which blooms over calm waters.

It is most likely the case that, like so many other myths, only a few rudiments have been preserved from the myth of Narcissus; its major theme appears to have been longing. This was the bane of the nymph, Echo, who yearned in vain to be embraced by Narcissus and was so wasted by melancholia that in the end there was nothing left of her but her voice.

Narcissus saw his image, but he did not recognize it. Over the entrance to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi it was written: “Know thyself!”; like many others before and after him, Narcissus failed before the most difficult of all tasks; he sought his ego in vain in his reflected image. The verb “to know” has a double meaning; Narcissus plunged into an erotic adventure just as Faust plunged into a spiritual one.

It is precisely this all-consuming longing that also constitutes a distinctive sign of the drug and its pleasures; desire always remains a step behind satisfaction. Images excite us like a mirage in the desert; thirst becomes a burning. We can also imagine it as a descent into a cave that divides into an increasingly more narrow and impassible labyrinth of galleries. There, we are threatened with the fate of Elis Fröbom, the hero of Hoffmann’s tale, “The Mines of Falun”. He never returned, he was lost to the world; this also happened to the monk of Heisterbach, who got lost in the forest and only returned to his monastery three hundred years later. This forest is time.

## 26

The substances that engender states of narcotic intoxication seem more subtle and more ethereal to us than those that stimulate the will. After the great spell cast in his nocturnal

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<sup>14</sup> See footnote 12 above.

studio, Faust is led, first of all, to Auerbach's Cellar, with its dissolute drinkers, and only later to the witches' den.

We speak of a "narcotic perfume". The word comes from the Greek ναρκόω, "narcotize". In southern regions there are species of narcissus whose scent is thought to be dangerous. Euphoria and analgesia ensue from the inhalation of volatile substances, such as laughing gas and ether, which was, in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fashionable recreational vehicle, and Maupassant devoted an essay to it. In the magic of the classical era there are many references to the smoke that not only induces lethargy but also serves as a subtle vehicle for the visions that ensue upon lethargy. We find such scenes in *The Thousand and One Nights*, but also in authors like Cazotte, Hoffmann, Poe, Kubin and others.

There are reasons to assume that the visionary aspect of intoxication is also the more meaningful aspect from a qualitative point of view. If we want to form a judgment about this question, we must consider the common root from which the varied forms of the imagination grow. The risk we take when we use drugs consists in the fact that we are undermining one of the fundamental powers of existence: time. This can of course happen in various ways: depending on whether we narcotize ourselves or stimulate ourselves, we expand or contract time. This is, once again, related to the way we travel through and explore space: in one case, the effort to increase movement within it; in the other, the rigidity of the magic world.

If we compare time, as has been customary since antiquity, with the current of a river, it seems that under the effect of stimulants the channel of the river becomes narrow, the current accelerates, as if it was descending a valley by way of seething whirlpools and waterfalls. Thoughts, mimicry and gestures follow this current; this type of intoxicated person thinks and works more quickly and impulsively than the sober person, and also less predictably.

Under the influence of narcotics, on the other hand, time slows down and forms a pool. The current flows more calmly; the banks recede from view. When the lethargic state begins to take effect, consciousness drifts like a ship on a lake whose shores cannot even be glimpsed. Time becomes limitless, oceanic.

That is how the boundless opium dreams came that Thomas de Quincey described. He imagines that he "was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins, with mummies and sphynxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of the eternal pyramids". In *Suspiria de Profundis*, a collection of essays that was published a quarter of a century after the *Confessions*, he evokes that disproportionate expansion of time and says that astronomical numbers are incapable of describing it. "... in valuing the *virtual* time lived during some dreams, the measurement by generations is ridiculous—by millennia is ridiculous...."

Other authors, such as Cocteau, have corroborated this feeling of distance involved in the human consciousness of time: "Tout ce qu'on fait dans la vie, même l'amour, on le fait

dans le train express qui roule vers la mort. Fumer l'opium, c'est quitter le train en marche; c'est s'occuper d'autre chose que de la vie, de la mort."<sup>15</sup>

## 27

Time passes more quickly at the animal pole, more slowly at the plant pole. This perspective also sheds light on the relation of the *narcotica* to pain. Most human beings become familiarized with narcotics thanks to their anesthetic properties. The feeling of happiness, the euphoria connected with their use, leads to addiction. The fact that depressive subjects succumb with particular pleasure to morphine is explained by the fact that they experience existence as such as pain.

Many *narcotica* are also at the same time *phantastica*. When Sertürner isolated the alkaloid of morphine in 1803, he separated opium's analgesic power from its eidetic power. By doing so he performed a great service for countless sufferers, but at the same time he robbed the juice of the poppy, as Novalis sings, of its light.<sup>16</sup>

Someone who yearns for the world of images does not use narcotics either to escape from his pain or to feel euphoria; he seeks the fantastic. He is not motivated by a fear of suffering, but by a sublime curiosity, even audacity. In the magic and the witchcraft of the Middle Ages the world of the alkaloids constantly intervenes: the incantation is accompanied by potions, salves and vapors, and often involves mandrake, stramonium and belladonna.

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<sup>15</sup> The entire passage is as follows: "... Everything one does in life, even love, occurs in an express train racing toward death. To smoke opium is to get out of the train while it is still moving. It is to concern oneself with something other than life or death." Jean Cocteau, *Opium: The Diary of a Cure*, translated by Margaret Crosland and Sinclair Road, Grove Press, New York, 1958.

<sup>16</sup> An allusion to the *Hymns to the Night*, probably to the following verses: ["Precious balm drips from thy hand out of its bundle of poppies. Thou upliftest the heavy-laden wings of the soul. Darkly and inexpressibly are we moved—joy-startled, I see a grave face that, tender and worshipful, inclines toward me, and, amid manifold entangled locks, reveals the youthful loveliness of the Mother. How poor and childish a thing seems to me now the Light—how joyous and welcome the departure of the day—because the Night turns away from thee thy servants, you now strew in the gulfs of space those flashing globes, to proclaim thy omnipotence—thy return—in seasons of thy absence"—from the prose translation by George MacDonald (American translator's supplementary note)]. "A precious balm / dripping from your hand, / from the bouquet of poppies. / With sweet intoxication you spread/the tired wings of the spirit / and you give us happiness / dark and unspeakable / secrets, like you / happinesses that allow one to/dare to navigate the heavens. / How paltry the light appears, your colored things". Novalis, *Escritos escogidos*, tr. Jenaro Talens and E.-E. Keil, Visor, Madrid, 1984, p. 17.

In those days, witchcraft was treated as a capital offense. Apparitions were more worthy of faith than reality. For Faust, the “realm of the spirits”, although largely reduced to the “spiritual world”, is “never barred”, but he is only concerned with the success of the spell. He is no longer tormented by religious or moral scruples.

Similarly, in our time, the spiritual man who is a friend of the Muses asks what drugs have to offer him. By virtue of his nature, he cannot be interested in the dynamic accentuation of his vital forces, or happiness, or the absence of pain. For him, it is not even a matter of enhancing or refining the visionary faculty; like Faust in his study, what he is looking for is something that “supervenes”.<sup>17</sup> This supervention does not presuppose knowledge of new information. Nor does it imply making the empirical world a better place. Faust sought to escape from his study, where a Wagner would remain for his whole life, feeling happy. “I know very much indeed; but I want to know everything”: it is an infinite desire and, in this sense, the discovery of America also belongs to the world of facts; no spaceship can take him out of his world.

No form of propulsion, even if it is capable of reaching the stars, can nullify that ancient saying: “From self there is no remission.”<sup>18</sup> This is also true for the accentuation of the vital force. Neither multiplication nor raising it to another power changes the cardinal number. One expects something different from that which supervenes, rather than an accentuation of a dynamic or vital type. In every era it was expected to bring an amplification, a complement, an addition. Which does not imply a strengthening, but a sum.

In the past, there was no doubt that in the spell, whether thanks to ascetic practice or to other means, something strange supervened. In the meantime, reason has since acquired a power, against which this conviction is only defensible in a rearguard action. But to decide if that which supervenes comes from without or from within, if, therefore, it has its origin in the universe or in the deepest depths of the ego, only poses a pseudo-problem.

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<sup>17</sup> This word, *eintreten*, and its derivative (*Eintretendes*), appear frequently throughout this essay. Along with the metaphor of approach, they play a crucial role in Jünger’s reflections on intoxication and other anomalous states of consciousness. Its etymology is rich in meanings: “to enter, to happen, to realize, to give, to be present, to supervene”. Jünger is referring to an out-of-the-ordinary event that erupts into consciousness in a kind of epiphany or revelation, facilitated both by certain drugs as well as by various ascetic disciplines. Depending on the context, we shall substitute the phrase “that which supervenes” for “the supervening”.

<sup>18</sup> Jünger quotes only part of one line from the famous Goethian poem, “Primal Words, Orphic” (*Urworte Orphisch*, 1817), which begins as follows: “So musst du sein, dir kannst du nich entfliehen”, “Thus must you be, from self there is no remission.”, Goethe, *Selected Poems*, tr. John Whaley, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1998, p. 123. [Footnote modified by American translator to provide English translation and its source].

The decisive point is not where the plumb line first enters the water, but how far down it goes. There, the vision is so compelling that there is neither the space nor the need to ask about its reality, not to speak of its origin. When canonical texts, authorities or even coercive means are necessary to legitimize a vision, this faculty has already lost all its power; it then acts as a shadow or an echo. But the disposition for such experiences must always remain intact.

### ***The Plant as Autonomous Power*<sup>19</sup>**

## **29**

Whenever certain animal and plant juices intermingle, new molecules come into being, and many different kinds of chains and rings are formed. Only recently have we been able to direct our gaze towards these microscopic structures; if we were incapable of doing so, basically not much would have changed. As some suspect and many guess, it is likely that this new perspective is a distraction from more important questions.

The fact that some of these molecules nourish the body, while others pass through it while remaining neutral, is as incontestable as the fact that other molecules trigger mental effects. It is on this perception that the American Indian distinction between everyday food and divine food is based, as is the difference established by the more advanced cultures between natural substances and sacred substances.

The question of whether these effects are triggered or “supervene” transcends the knowledge of psychologists and chemists. If we recognize the plant as an autonomous power that supervenes to take root and flower within us, then we distance ourselves by several degrees from the skewed perspective that holds that spirit [*Geist*] is the monopoly of human beings and consequently is something that does not exist outside them. The planetary leveling process must clear the way to a new worldview; this is the task that the new century will assume. The nihilist and materialist theories are called upon to prepare the way for it; thus, their persuasive power, so incomprehensible to its opponents. In the midst of the hurricane that uproots trees and strips the roofs off houses, of course, we do not perceive the attraction of a distant windless zone: the same is true of time.

Here we touch upon the borders of the disputes concerning the Last Supper that, for thousands of years, have exercised people’s minds and that, in their time, occasionally blazed with heated passion. It is about bread and wine, about the differences between presence and approach. When something really takes place, the crude and subtle differences vanish. For neither penetrates into the “interior of nature”. We can attribute the widest possible scope to both “that is” and “that means”. Basically, they both coincide at one point. On the very night of the celebration of the Eucharist, the Supper “meant”, beyond its present reality, something more, although at a high stage of approach.

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<sup>19</sup> An English translation directly from the German original of this chapter is available online (as of March 2016) at: [https://www.erowid.org/plants/plants\\_article1.shtml](https://www.erowid.org/plants/plants_article1.shtml) [American translator’s note].



Today, we have other problems. Above all, this one: that on this path, gods no longer insinuate themselves.

### 30

The isolation of cocaine was first carried out in 1860 at the famous Wöhler Institute in Gottingen, one of the Pandora's Boxes for our world. This precipitation and concentration of psychoactive principles, obtained from organic substances, is characteristic of the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century; it began with the extraction of morphine from the juice of the poppy, achieved by a twenty-year-old man, Sertürner, who thus developed [*entwickelte*] or, more accurately, unwrapped [*auswickelte*] the first alkaloid.

Like every approach to the world of the Titans, here, too, concentration and radiation are increased. In this world, forces and substances appear which are certainly obtained from nature, but are too strong and too vehement for our natural powers of comprehension, so that if he does not want to destroy himself, the human being is obliged to maintain a greater and greater distance from this world and to exercise more and more caution. These forces and substances are visible modifications of the entry into a new spiritual world.

Fermentation, distillation, precipitation and finally production of radioactive matter from an organic substance. That is how the 20<sup>th</sup> century began: 1903, discovery of radium and polonium; 1911, Nobel Prize awarded to the Curies for having extracted pure radium from enormous quantities of Joachimsthal pitchblende. In 1945, the Americans handed over this zone to the Russians, who extracted vast quantities of fissile material there.

Every transition is also a break, every profit also a loss. The pain is particularly bitter when, even if you do not understand it, you suffer intensely; above all if you still suffer from the retreat of the gods from the Titans. Views on this question therefore differ like night and day. Pierre Curie was among the first victims of motor vehicle traffic, killed in 1906. Léon Bloy gloated over the news about "the crushing of the famous brain".

### 31

Just as Goethe considered colors to be one of the adventures of light, we should contemplate ecstatic intoxication as a triumphal march of the plants in their passage through our minds. Thus, the immense family of the nightshades not only provides us with physical nourishment, but also nourishes our dreams. In the monographs devoted to these alkaloids one must reconcile the systematic spirit with the visionary power of a Novalis or a Fechner. The name *Solanaceae* is allegedly derived from the Latin *solamen*, consolation.

Just as the plant seduces us not only physically, but also spiritually, it had long cohabited erotically with the animals. To understand this we must recognize them as our equals, even as stronger brethren. The mystery of the bees, which is at the same time the mystery

of flowers, embodies one of the most marvelous phenomena and one of the true miracles of nature. The amorous duet of two creatures so incredibly different in form and degree of evolution must have once been attested, as if by magic, thanks to countless acts of solicitude. The blossoms assume the form of sexual organs that adapt themselves in a wondrous fashion to completely alien creatures: flies, hawk moths and butterflies, and also sunbirds and hummingbirds. Before that, they were pollinated by the wind.

This was one of the short-circuits that interlace the chain of ancestors and their systems of protection. A Great Transition. In such images the veil of Isis becomes transparent. Cosmogonic Eros breaks through the classifications of the civilized world. It would never have occurred to us that such things were possible, if we did not see it confirmed a thousand times with each walk through a spring meadow or a flower-covered mountainside. Nonetheless, it was not until our times that a human being revealed the secret. Once again it was a rector: Christian Konrad Sprengel, in *The Mystery of Nature Revealed* (1793). What we call mysteries are, of course, nothing but manifestations; we approach them in the sound of the bell-like buzzing that we hear under the blossoming linden tree. Knowledge is correspondence.

## 32

Plants, although they hardly have any capacities for movement, cast their spells over things that move. Novalis had seen this in his *Hymns*. Without plants there would be no life on the planet. All the creatures that eat and breathe depend on them. We do not know for sure just how far their spiritual power reaches. It is not without reason that the parable is based on them, above all.

The effect provoked by tea, tobacco, and opium, but also often by the mere scent of certain flowers—that is, that scale of delights that extend from a vague dreaminess to anesthesia—represents something more than a pallet of different states of consciousness. There must be something else, something new which supervenes.

Just as the plant forms sexual organs to mate with the bees, it also celebrates its nuptials with human beings; and this bond gives us the gift of access to worlds that would otherwise have remained closed to us. Here is also concealed the mystery of all addictions; anyone who wants to cure them must offer a spiritual equivalent.

### ***Ecstatic Intoxication: Homeland and Pilgrimage***

## 33

It is often observed that drugs are divided up into zones that delimit certain domains of influence. The dreams of the lotus-eaters flourish in the East. The spirit wanders while the body lies on the bed. The visions are not always beautiful and serene; they can also be horrible and cruel. Drugs play the role of Scheherazade, who, during the night, “alleviated the hours of the Sultan’s insomnia”.

Western man prefers the effects of stimulants that favor activity. This difference may also be noted when the same substance is used in both the East and the West. On the one hand, the man in Chelabya, who, before he was served his coffee, smoked the hookah; on the other hand, the type who, during a break at work, compulsively chain smokes one cigarette after another.

In such a landscape, it is necessary to increase the consumption of means that produce an exaltation of the vital force without any imaginative virtues, a vital well-being with an accelerated pulse. As the smoker chain-smokes one cigarette after another, the pauses between cigarettes become more brief; the drug is degraded to a mere fuel. Now and then, one needs oil for the gummed-up engine: colorless tranquilizers and soporifics. The festive aspect of ecstatic intoxication, the approach to new worlds and the risk it entailed, has been forgotten.

### 34

The introduction of pure *phantastica* in the western world only entailed a minor risk as long as, as was the case with opium, they were not deprived of their visionary effects by way of chemical procedures. Their enjoyment presupposes the serene pleasure of the world of images and therefore an inclination that is contrary to the style of our time. DeQuincey and Baudelaire represent the two most illustrious cases of knowledge of the arcane mysteries of opium. In this context, we must not forget to mention Novalis. The romantics were highly sensitive to the unusual. Some verses of Annete von Droste lead us to assume that the poppy, at least, wreathed her soul. I am thinking of “Sleepless Night”, in particular. De Quincey had also availed himself to an immense degree of the power and the sumptuousness of the poppy, as well as its horrors, as is testified to by the well-known passage in his *Confessions* dedicated to the *Consul Romanus*. That is how the gods see the world.

The dreamer prefers solitude; he does not want any unexpected interruptions. The real world is full of dangers for him; he is at the very least exposed to the curse of ridicule. Baudelaire expressed this in the symbol of the albatross as portent. Even if only this poem is considered, it can be said that his journey to the East was worth the trouble for him, and even more so for us. There, the gods persevered more in the dream-state than in heroic passion or martyrdom. Meditation is a form of the spirit that reconciles reason and fantasy; where both states are completely mingled, new worlds can arise.

In the West, the *phantastica* cannot become a mass threat like the pharmacological stimulants and tranquilizers; such as tobacco and alcohol, on the one hand, and sleeping pills and morphine, on the other.

Hashish is situated on the border, because it not only stimulates the eidetic powers, but also physical mobility. The collective enjoyment of opium is rare; it presupposes a community of esthetic and meditative inclinations or a shared taste for adventure. In this respect, the works of Farrère, Mirbeau and Loti contain abundant references to the literati

of the Hôtel Pimodan and the naval officers; but only because it is hard to find a comparable environment, that is, because it is so rare.

We must imagine the atmosphere of such sessions as that of a cultivated and concentrated sympathy, also associated with diffuse sensations of presence, as are manifested among spiritualists. The images are seen with the inner eye; they are indivisible and of a different kind from the ones that are offered by our dream factory, or even by our high-brow cultural spectacles. Baudelaire went to the theater not as a spectator, but to use the performance as a raw material that he inserted into his oneiric world and which he submitted to the style of that world. Confronted by ecstatic intoxication, art is transformed into a *collage*, an elementary school for approach. We should also imagine it as a reversal of the relation between desert and oasis: the oasis still has its emerald color, but the sands of the desert glitter like diamonds. Wherever one looks, the earth is refulgent with such precious stones; the difference between the jewel and its setting disappears.

### 36

The *phantastica* encountered an esoteric reception in the West. Around their trunk a whole new literature grew like a vine, which took root in the early romanticism and underwent further ramifications during the *fin de siècle*. The initiate radiated a dreary, arcane and disturbing atmosphere. It was not exactly a vice to which he surrendered, nor was it an irresistible crime. It was rather a theft committed against society, for which the latter reproached him: a theft whose most extreme form is suicide. We are bored with society; we thus leave the dull routine of the port behind us as we set sail aboard a small sailboat. Soon enough the wind fills the sails, and it will no longer be necessary to steer in search of lost isles; the latter emerge from the depths to the rhythm of desire. Of course, solitude itself already generates a feeling akin to ecstatic intoxication: the Argonauts who sailed alone across the ocean were not seeking so much the other shore as they were in search of this unknown “unity of the whole”.<sup>20</sup>

Such inclinations are innate, like other social deviations, political and erotic ones, for example. In the past, they were considered to be a distinctive trait of *outcasts*, the wicked people who lurked beyond the city walls, and who frequented mills, tanneries and houses of ill-repute. These were the places frequented by wandering bards and musicians, gypsies and fortune-tellers, alchemists and treasure-hunters. In their environs, they cultivated *datura stramonium* and belladonna, and dug up the mandrake that grew under the gallows.

Two strangers meet on a train or on a park bench; one mentions the name of an author, the title of a book, and they exchange information that they already know. Most people

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<sup>20</sup> Jünger thought that he could detect in the composite word *All-Einigkeit* (the unity of the whole) an echo of the adjective *allein* (alone), which was in turn formed from *all* (the whole) and *ein* (one).

would undoubtedly recognize this as a depiction of the enlightened petit bourgeois, like Bouvard and Pécuchet at the beginning of the novel.

### 37

The centuries weave a coarsely-woven screen that does not entirely cover up changes in style. They often only attain their typical aspect in the heart of an era. This is also the case with the aspect of our own century. It is true that there are seeds and hints already at the beginning of the century, but they did not leave their mark on the landscape. Radio, wireless telegraphy, the transition from steam power to the combustion engine, from impressionism to cubism, the visions of Nietzsche, Lilienthal's wings: all of these things appear one by one, as if a virus was spreading. The roar of gigantic demolition operations covered up and smothered the details. Above all, the two world wars brought planning on a planetary scale in their wake. Nonetheless, now the world style has also become visible as if the outer shell that covered the avalanche of still-glowing metal has broken open: at first in isolated sectors, like the network of airports. There, other clocks are ticking, a new time prevails. Thus did Brobdingnag come to dwell among the Lilliputians—with the brutal ambitions of titanic power.

The new world style also embraces drugs and ecstatic intoxication. The great current of pharmaceutical stimulants and narcotics flows endlessly, and even swells and accelerates. The border between their medical and recreational uses is blurred, until pharmaceutical drugs become indispensable. In the whirlwind of the world of work and its stress many of these drugs have become food for the nerves. We can get some idea of just how massive the consumption of drugs is by looking at the machinery of the pharmaceutical industry that incessantly spits out an endless series of pills. All of these pills converge in multicolor rivers that once again diverge until they reach the most remote villages and huts. With regard to this point, too, one feels ambivalent, since chemistry is on the verge of breaking through this frontier, beyond which the remedy unleashes euphoric effects. Here the threat of abuse looms large. The taboos imposed by the law are left behind in its wake.

However, with the progress of culture, the serene joy of the outlying districts of the cannabis and poppy gardens is lost. On the one hand, everything is moving faster, while on the other hand, within the setting as a whole, images produced and reproduced by mechanical means satisfy—or appear to satisfy—and which, like stage scenery, surround and constrain the field of vision. Collective dreams displace individual dreams, the inner world of images is overwhelmed by the external world.

It is true that there is a hunger, an admonitory feeling of emptiness, that is never completely satiated: the suspicion that one is spending one's days fruitlessly.

### 38

And now we come to the stage of this great procession in which new needs are awakened, needs that are consistent with the world of the Titans. This explains the

transition to those drugs that we call “psychopharmaceuticals”. The term is inadequate: it is likely that it will be replaced by another.

Once again, we must point out that the stimulants have been transformed into fuel, while the soporifics have been sterilized. The real danger presumably consists in the fact that they trigger somnolence without dreams. However, with the culture of the bourgeois epoch, the *phantastica* have lost their function as a counterweight. When the house is falling down around your ears, the garden is also inhospitable. With the passage of the modernists’ lilacs, lilies, and interwoven crocuses, so, too, have the poppies and the dreams that accompanied them passed away.

Likewise, in the middle of this [20<sup>th</sup>] century, something new in the world of Titanism emerged: a group of substances whose powers and formulas are classified with reference to mescaline. They are substances of an organic origin, listed in the *secretis herbarum* of Albertus Magnus, but they are brought into alignment with the style of the times as soon as they are analyzed and reproduced by way of chemical synthesis. As in Lilienthal’s motorized wings, these substances were also preceded by a series of tests. As for psychoactivity, the ecstatic intoxication produced by mescaline was the object of research at the Beringer Institute. The resulting reports (1927) provided extensive, but superficial, documentation. Hans Heinz Evers, who may very well be described as one of those curious but minor intellects, did not pass up the opportunity to experience the ecstatic intoxication of mescaline during his journeys. But he did not even reach the stage that Maupassant had attained with ether: for him it was just a symphony of colors.

We owe to the land of Mexico a series of Titanic variants; the soil of Mexico possesses a primordial fertility. The turkey, maize, the sunflower: the chicken, wheat, and the daisy appear to have been transformed into Brobingnags. The nightshades astound us with their gigantic tubers and fruits. A place fit for pyramids and emperors, eagles and serpents, shamans and prophets, witches and sorcerers.

Mescaline and its relatives produce an effect that is more brutal and demanding than the effect of the opiates; they transport the user not just to the visionary world and its palaces, but also bring him down into the depths of the subterranean crypts. Extremely archaic visions recover their credibility. Stimulants and narcotics modify time: they expand it or accelerate it. But with mescaline the earth is cloven; the creative power of time returns to the origins.

Some doctors have entertained the idea of restoring the health of sick people in this way, or perhaps even to cure them as if by a bout of fever or a *shock*.<sup>21</sup> Those individuals who are lovers of art, the poets, might have yet other reasons to descend to the primal source where the river Lethe flows into the Styx; there, too, lay the source of the fountain of Castalia. Forgetting and stupefaction preceded initiation. Signs that can also be discerned in the history of painting. And we have not even scratched the surface of its Mexican component.

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<sup>21</sup> In English in the original [American translator’s note].

## *A Guided Tour of Death*

40

One of the main problems of our subject is clearing the way forward. With respect to intelligence, this would be the leap that the biologists refer to as a mutation.

A *shock*, an unexpected assault like ecstatic intoxication, can suddenly open up new perspectives, and it can do so all at once, and therefore without the mediation of evolution or education. We may also think of an earthquake that knocks down a wall. Its intervention is certainly violent; one must, however, keep in mind that, if it was not so violent, this wall would perhaps have restricted one's perspectives throughout one's entire life, until, in the end, death, the great equalizer, would have made it disappear along with one's house.

When the umbilical cord is cut with a blade or is chewed off and the newborn creature breathes in his first mouthful of air, we behold a Great Transition linked to the opening up of a way forward. Likewise, when the dying man exhales his last breath, he is brought with more or less preparation to undertake another Great Transition. We have never abandoned the hope that, at the very moment of our death, the dying man should be connected with new roads. We are confronted by a question of faith, rather than of knowledge.

A penetrating pain, the loss of a loved one or a lover, elation at success or an epileptic seizure can also be associated with the eruption of new knowledge or abilities. We may understand it as access to a reserve of amorphous intelligence. There, we coin money from gold ingots. There are numerous images that can express this notion: the scales fall from our eyes, our tongue is set free, we are filled with the spirit, the sky falls, the sea covers the land. Then you hear people say: "Hearken!", "Pay heed!" or even "Behold!".

Everyone has experienced such phenomena fleetingly or in a small way. Poetic inspiration can also be called to our support on the spur of the moment. A great poem owes its existence to the fact that the tongue is loosened: perhaps the only true statement among so many verses. The tree of life flourishes only once. The vital force rises from the roots, it bursts forth from dreams: where everyone is brilliant.

Ecstasy and intoxication: it is hard to distinguish between the state of rapture that wells up from within and a similar state induced by external factors; in the Acts of the Apostles (2, 13, *et seq.*), Peter is the model ordinary man who undergoes a transformation against his will. The rock becomes conscious of his Uranian force. The handing over of the keys is an apt symbol.

Paul also underwent a transformation, and it came upon him in the form of a sudden shattering attack that left him blind for three days. Paul, however, was a much more

complex individual than Peter and therefore was never capable of attaining the popularity of the Apostle who was invested with the power of the keys.

Since time immemorial, shamans and prophets, magi and mystagogues have understood the intimate relation between intoxication and ecstasy. That is why drugs have always played a role in their ceremonies, initiations and mysteries. These drugs comprise one vehicle among others: such as meditation, fasting, dance, music, profound contemplation of works of art or violent emotions. We should therefore never overestimate their role. They also open the doors to some dreadful prospects; Hassan Ibn Al Sabbâh with his assassins offers us one example.

Possession by drugs creates forms of demonic slavery and servitude that require neither guards nor barbed wire. Hemp is woven into ropes, and hashish is also derived from the same plant, and hashish creates even more tightly woven cords: the Boer farmers used hashish to keep their Hottentots under control. There is also hashish in marijuana cigarettes; the dealers in Chicago hand them out for free to school children whom they enslave just like the rats that were hypnotized by the Pied Piper of Hamelin. These children became clever thieves; one day, when there were no more good targets for theft, they pawned their clothes to satisfy their desire for drugs. They told their parents that they had been stolen.

In this case, the use of the term “toxic substance” is justified, and strict vigilance should be recommended. However, when I was in Chicago preparing the first part of this book for publication as a chapter in a collection of essays in homage to Mircea Eliade, I was shocked by the title that had been chosen by the translator: *Drugs and Intoxication*. It seemed to me that *Drugs and Ecstasy* would have been more appropriate.

It is also true that the title does not refer to ecstasy, but to the tearing open of the woven veil by the senses. This is closely related to anxiety or even to the sudden melancholy that is provoked by immersion in a state of intoxication. Ecstasy is nothing but a vehicle of approach to a world of essential repose and tranquility. It would be enough if we could use it even just once as a means of transition. In any event, it is a roll of the dice, an experiment, a voyage of discovery. One must not judge anyone who is capable of such an experience. I would prefer, at this point, not to go as far as Huxley. I would rather express my agreement with Gurdjieff, one of our modern sages, who said that one must choose, and even later demand, caution.

## 42

Gurdjieff, who gathered an esoteric circle of followers in Paris, seems to have penetrated into passageways that had long been buried under rubble. He was from the Caucasus. Perhaps he was capable of interpreting these phenomena as vestigial folk traditions. Certain abilities have been preserved, on islands or in remote mountain valleys; such is the case of the gift of interpreting oracles, and prophecy. These traits come and go with the bloodline. It is also possible that they emerge from a depth with which we have lost



all contact: this was the case with the Etruscan element among the Romans and the Celtic element on our present-day Atlantic seaboard.

Like many of his fellow Caucasians, Gurdjieff had a taste for strong distilled drinks. It seems, in general, that the initiate does not have to abide by the same rules as his followers. It is not uncommon for an enlightened master to die from overindulgence after feasting on wild boar. Asceticism can be as effective as intoxication. As we have said, they are nothing but vehicles. Not everyone, however, is able to judge when it is better to opt for one or the other.

Gurdjieff did not grant much importance to drugs, in any event, much less than Huxley, who saw Mescaline as a kind of substitute for religion. The Caucasian thought, however, that it would be good, once in their lives, to submerge the acolytes in a waterfall, until they could not endure it any longer, to show them the possibilities that lie beyond the routine. Then one could work on their personalities for ten, maybe twenty years.

The same method, therefore, which was employed by the Old Man of the Mountain, but with metaphysical intentions. The abbot of a Syrian monastery followed different principles, for, as Cassian informs us, he locked his novices in wooden lockers and ordered them to clean them every morning for one year. This had to be carried out as an exercise of patience and obedience.

#### 43

Is this therefore a question of two different pedagogical methods? Yes, but every doctrine must incorporate more than a method. Schools are also vehicles, and they are worthless when they ignore the goal. Every passable road must reflect the road of life.

The Syrian abbot knew that life is hard, and that, nonetheless, devoted patience is worthy of recompense that beggars the imagination. His wooden locker was a reflection of the Tree of Life or the palm tree that will finally bear fruit.

Gurdjieff operated within the same *topos*, the same *tao*. He wanted, however, to present the palm tree with its fruit in the magical image ... not as a mirage seen in a sojourn in the desert, nor as an otherworldly promise, but as an attainable goal. Therefore, it was not an illusory reflection, but one that anticipates the real goal.

#### 44

Anyway, not even all mirages are altogether unreal. They are based on something tangible: real palm trees, real springs, a real oasis. And everything is more beautiful in the imagination. If one does not achieve the goal it is not because the goal does not exist, but because the senses and perception that grant their assent to these tangible objects are inadequate. One is led astray not by the incontrovertible truth, but the insufficient system, the lack of intelligence and instinct.

The appearance is not unreal, but it is rather a sign upon which one must base one's decisions. The real location of the oasis can be determined with a map and a compass. The traveler in the desert is consumed in the desert for a lack of knowledge or for an excess of thirst: in short, because he does not roar "like the stag yearning for fresh water".

#### 45

Wherever one cannot distinguish between desert and oasis, one cannot speak of abundance. It is true that even the most waterless desert can be irrigated and farmed thanks to modern technology. But this affects our argument only tangentially.

The Syrian abbot set the bar much higher than Gurdjieff, compared to whom the latter seems like a Simon Magus facing the Apostles. Both, however, lived in the desert: they sojourned in the vicinity of the gateway to death. Approaches of greater or lesser degrees of transcendence.

Here we must insert a note that, like our observation about the irrigation of the desert, must only serve *ad usum* of those who are on the verge of transition, and this is how it must be understood. It is not a matter of indifference to know whether you are in a doorway or a waiting room. Here one can ask about the location of the exit and also about the route and schedule. Information that can be particularly valuable in places threatened by catastrophe.

This is why, since the most remote eras, in ceremonies and festivals, rites, initiations and mysteries, the symbolic journey through death and rebirth is celebrated. The annihilation of consciousness is followed by resurrection; the dust is transfigured in splendor. The believer participates in the death and rebirth of Adonis; the participant in the Mysteries ascends from the darkness to the Eleusinian light.<sup>22</sup>

#### 46

Annihilation in every dimension: even in the moral dimension, in the necessary sequence of decline and renewal, as it was described by Hamann and Kanne and was an article of faith among the Pietists. Annihilation and healing, a feeling of resurrection, even after serious illnesses.

*From afar  
Lord, I have seen Thy throne....*

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<sup>22</sup> On the possible use of ergot in the Eleusinian Mysteries, see the now-classic study by G. Wasson, A. Hofmann and C. A. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (Ethno-Mycological Studies No. 4), Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1978.

Desperation, in every sense of the word. *Ver-zweifeln*: that is, to reach the point when doubt, and with it hope as well, die or hit bottom.<sup>23</sup> *Dubitare fortiter*.

One cannot consider real phenomena without noting their psychological and physiological implications. Dreams can be harbingers of death years in advance; certain images, and they are likely to be archetypes, immediately precede it. What is the sequence of toxic chains before and after the last breath, and how does the process of dying actually take place? What are we to make of the claims of mothers to the effect that they hear the cries of their dying children, especially when they are being drowned, as if it were a message transmitted from vast distances? Is there some kind of aura that acts as a conductive medium, at least for hypersensitives, under certain circumstances?

These are questions with repercussions on moral life; on the way we bury our dead, for example. Almost every human being will sooner or later think about this question, even if for the most part subliminally. It is precisely here that the journey to death can temper not only the sense of sight, but also the spirit. Perhaps it could even open a few doors.

I am writing this passage on May 26, 1969, on Pentecost Monday, the day when the three Apollo astronauts returned to Earth after orbiting the Moon. This journey will be memorialized in the history of space travel, above all because of the complicated maneuvers of the lunar module that had to remain in orbit at a point at a minimum distance from the surface of the Moon. One can imagine a preparatory exercise for a Moon landing that is most likely to be carried out successfully.

Thus, even the journey to death can be interpreted as a preparatory exercise, perhaps even as a preparation for much more transcendent landings. The crewman is still intimately bound to his ship, but the day will come when he will abandon it.

### ***The Light on the Other Side of the Wall***

47

If we take a look at the growing flood of literature on ecstatic intoxication, without losing sight of the dual meaning of “research”, we shall find little wisdom and much science. Not only must we count among the properties of this literature the analysis of the material and its effects, that is, the whole range of chemical, pharmacological and psychological discoveries. Nor is curiosity sufficient, with its multiple variations, from the “enchantment” of the Swabians to the exoticism of the Hôtel Pimodan.

This is also true for the contemporary exploration of the fringe regions and their isles, where ecstatic intoxication can be gathered like tropical fruits. According to Gottfried

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<sup>23</sup> A play on words involving *ver-zweifeln* (to lose hope), *Verzweiflung* (desperation) and *Zweifel* (doubt). The prefix *ver-*, added to a verb, can mean both the consummation as well as the intensification of an action. Therefore, *ver-zweifeln* is equivalent to, according to Jünger, “to vehemently doubt” [*dubitare fortiter*].

Benn: “Potent brains are not strengthened through milk but through alkaloids.” I prefer to think of such a policy as detrimental; there are many examples. In the industry of the spectacle and of public opinion, there is a constantly growing number of hedonistic young people who have been ruined, for the most part, by the abuse of cigarettes and pills, and that rather than having attained to spiritual maturity, they leave this world with medical assistance.

On the other hand, what Benn said about the proscription of such journeys is correct: “Drugs, intoxications, ecstasies, spiritual exhibitionism—all this sounds infernal to most people.... [But] a state which wages wars in which three million men are killed within three years is hardly in a position to talk about damage.” He could have added: and as long as it obtains a major part of its revenues from trafficking in the poisons of civilization.

Benn came much closer to the crux of the matter (or of the third stage) when he maintains that the use of certain drugs, “by increasing visionary states”, can “supply the race with a stream of spiritual insights, which could lead to a new creative period”.<sup>24</sup>

Ludwig Klages (*Vom Kosmogonischen Eros* [*On the cosmogonic eros*], 1922), René Guénon (*Orient et Occident* [*East and West*], 1924), Henri Michaux, Jean Cocteau, Jules Boissière,<sup>25</sup> Gurdjieff and others have expressed similar views. Later in this text, we shall devote our attention to some views expressed by Huxley. It would be desirable to compile a precise bibliography, organized according to the various points of view. On this terrain, the road must be cleared with a lot of hard work, in the dark.

Only in the case of the rare exception does one manage to extract forms with esthetic value.

## 48

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<sup>24</sup> See Gottfried Benn, “Provoked Life: An Essay On The Anthropology Of The Ego”, tr. Ralph Metzler, *The Psychedelic Review*, No. 1 (1963), p. 1. This essay was written in the early 1940s, and can be considered to be a trailblazing work in contemporary reflections on ecstatic intoxication. See Enrique Ocaña, *El Dioniso moderno y la farmacia utópica*, Anagram, Barcelona, 1993, pp. 86-137. [Benn’s essay from *The Psychedelic Review* is available online (March 2016) at the website of the Lycaeum ([http://www.lycaeum.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.lycaeum.org/wiki/Main_Page)). American translator’s supplementary note.]

<sup>25</sup> Jules Boissière (1863-1896), French poet and world traveler, became acquainted with opium during his many visits to Indochina. Possessing vast knowledge of the native culture, he recounted his experiences with opium in two autobiographical chronicles: *Propos d’un intoxiqué* and *Fumeurs d’opium*. Jean Cocteau introduced Jünger to the latter literary jewel during the period of the German occupation of Paris. See E. Jünger, *Radiaciones I*, tr. Andrés Sánchez Pascual, Tusquets Editores (Andanzas 98/1), Barcelona, 1989, p. 285.

A sensation of absolute worthlessness on a planetary, or even cosmic, scale, is giving rise to “a lot of mistakes and little clarity”, and I am reminded of my own road. Everything is approach, and this approach does not possess a palpable, nameable objective; its meaning is found along the way.

Unfortunately, I always have to resort to the use of technical comparisons. These days, dealing with extremely dangerous substances, whether toxic or explosive, is unavoidable, and not just in laboratories. There are operations that can be conducted only through glass, or even lead, walls. For this purpose, the personnel of a laboratory use mechanical prehensile arms: they can also work with x-rays or electricity. This is not the problem. This image is important to us because it shows a correspondence between what happens on this side and what happens on the other side of the wall or protective shield. The correspondence can also be perceived from the other perspective: that is, by the effect of magnetic or explosive forces.

Now, the initiate into the Mysteries who, in an ecstatic trance, treads the narrow borderland between life and death and ventures into a zone where time is suspended, nonetheless remains on this side of the wall: he merely engages in approaches. Entry into the final chamber, the *camera della morte*, is forbidden to him. In the antechamber, however, something has brushed against him: it is not direct contact, but magnetic; not a causal but analogical action. Time is not vanquished in these tours of the border country, but the fact that one has returned from them makes it possible to expect that victory is possible. Since time immemorial this has represented the good news to us, the Eleusinian light.

If, having arrived at such a border, the senses become more acute or if matter begins to shine with more splendor, is a question that can remain unresolved. Concerning this point, see Ezekiel 1:27-28, Acts of the Apostles 2:2 and 2:9, and 3, Revelations 1:10, and many other passages in the Holy Scriptures and in the Apocrypha, where vestiges of the Cosmic Hunt are heard and seen.

These vestiges shine and echo over the wall, but we go about our affairs within time, in most cases, in parallel with the non-temporal. Even so, the fact that the human spirit was capable of formulating the axiom of such parallels is a miracle that is inexplicable on the basis of mere intuition. It was necessary for the act of conception to supervene. The fixing of the point of intersection in the far distance had already become, in the Baroque period (Leibniz, Descartes, Spinoza), an enterprise of great constructive audacity, which limited itself in part out of consideration, in part out of prudence. Today, no one who values his intellectual reputation would take such attempts seriously and the horror they inspire is understandable, since they could very well cost us dearly.

## 49

In conclusion, let us take a look at some more considerations on the perspective that opens up on the frontiers of time. By chance, I just received a poem by Flavia Belange in this morning's mail:

*Where death has his abode  
with dances and conversations  
and the love of one's spouse  
the bed still warm  
solemnly decorated  
for a festival  
where the flautists will perform—  
life is from the very start  
only an ephemeral instant....  
The death of the warrior in Etruria  
where, under the ground  
he waits to enter the banquet hall.*

These verses reminded me of the ancient cemetery of Tarquinia, in whose crypts I spent some time while on the surface the poppies bloomed and the rye ripened. Many have experienced the bliss that is dispensed there, down below, among the dead. In such a place drugs are not necessary: the present moment is intense. In general, “present” (*Gegenwart*) is the intensive of “instant” (*Augenblick*). The instant is the chalice, while the wine is the present (*Praesentia* is also the presence of spirit, even of power. Ovid: “*tanta est praesentia veri*”, *Metamorphoses IV*, 612).

Bathed in the light of a more radiant sun, the poppy bloomed more gloriously. It was really as if it drank wine; by rising to the surface, many present moments have vouched for this. Death is hospitable there, present in the quality of the hostess.

Next, the following question is posed: what happened down below and is still happening? The only possible response is that nothing has happened. This is the sign of the great metamorphoses: the universe does not move, not even a breeze stirs.

However, since time immemorial, priests and sages have flourished on the invention of stories about what happened there and what will always happen.

## 50

In an absolutely miraculous universe, miracles are unnecessary. For this reason, the Heavenly City has no temples or sanctuaries. And for this same reason, the miracles in the New Testament are much weaker than the parables. “Your son lives!”: this is not a miracle, but a parable that points to a miracle. If this saying is accepted as a statement about questions of fact, that is, if one takes it “in itself” as a miracle rather than as a sign, then one situates it at the same level of importance as facts like a heart transplant. But the meaning of these words is much more comprehensive. It is a claim that encompasses life and death. Like Blaiberg, the man from Nain died twice, despite the fact that they are both immortal.

## 51

This claim can be felt and touched. Representations of the beyond realize our desires, not because they point towards the far distance, but towards something that is very close to us; they are projections. In this sense, approach both confirms the religions and their greatness and at the same time it does away with them. Both time as well as space can be concentrated at the price of diversity. Thus, on avenues there are perspectives from which the trees converge and overlap in the image of one vast tree.

Art can help with overcoming fear. It is also the task of architecture which, like art, goes beyond mere need. If it fails to do so, and is subordinated totally to pure practicality and its economy, in the best cases with esthetic trimmings, it is necessary that fear will increase. This fear is, as in any era, the fear of death, which today, in conformance with the style of the epoch, is experienced as an effect of technology. We have always needed those robust spirits who do not accept these demonstrations of power *a priori*, and in this sense Mao's statement that "The atomic bomb is a paper tiger" represents one of the few brilliant maxims of our era. Lao-Tse could have said the same thing.

Landscapes, in the natural sense and also in the sense of those associated with primitive cultures, early cultures and high civilizations, are condemned to disappear. And we have to resign ourselves to this. That these aggressions are subject to a fixed time-scale and to an ineluctable destiny in the framework of the landscapes of the factory and workshop is a claim that I have already formulated in *The Worker* (1932), while the question of their cyclical nature was addressed in my *At the Wall of Time* (1959). Fire can also contribute to "whitenings". The pre-Socratics were already familiar with such "purifications".

At this point we are confronting a particular aspect, that is: we ask ourselves how the individual is capable of enduring this situation without suffering grave harm. The fact that he lives in a workshop is a fact, but not a consolation. It is the usual practice to call attention to a state of perfection to "maintain the morale of the people"—from a religious, metaphysical, technical, economic point of view—that is, to feed them with vague promises. This is what priests, tyrants, and good and bad paterfamilias have done since time immemorial. "You must wait until you are older", the child already heard. When he is older, however, his concerns have changed; but the restlessness remains.

The claims of the State, which today disguises itself as society, can become irresistible. For the individual, there is always the possibility of evading these claims, even if only by way of suicide. "The possibility of suicide forms part of our capital." This is one the sayings with which, now and then, I have provoked scandals, and I have heard one of the celebrities who frequent the cafes, figures who these days, sometimes for a very long time, receive tribute as demigods, say: "It is time for our esteemed author to put his capital to work."

With respect to approach, the desire to flee from reality out of a mere quest for pleasure is irrelevant and even harmful. Everything that we project upon the past—sumptuous temples and pyramids, monasteries and Gothic cathedrals, republics and empires from other times—is painted on the same backdrop. The same is true of future paradises, the

perfection of technology, the World State without disease or war, nuclear fusion, intergalactic space travel. In this landscape a lot of things happen, and the more things happen in the future, the more intense will be consumption, the consumption of the substance.<sup>26</sup> I have heard that they have installed oxygen tanks on the streets of Tokyo. It has become necessary to install air refueling stations.

All of this is more or less perfect—when it comes right down to it, it is therefore imperfect. To place this dynamic world in the right perspective, as in the Etruscan necropolises, would be to fill the instant of the present, the essence of being, tumultuous and deafening time, with silence. We only fleetingly approach the immense wealth in which we participate and that is always promised and predicted for us again and again. In time, its vision would be unbearable for us. However, approach can lead to transparency. Then it is manifested physiognomically and symptomatically: in works and deeds, in faces and works of art.

And also in landscapes. “No one who really knows nature is unaware of the truth that every spiritual phenomenon has, here below, its symbol, and that, consequently, nature as a whole is presented to our eyes as a hieroglyph.” So said Baader, whom, as is also the case with Böhme, I only quote with reservations, with respect to words like “here below”, but whose vision of art and nature should not be disregarded. In his view, art is the reflection or transparency of supreme concepts in certain forms of sensory reality: *fermenta cognitionis*.

## Europe

### *Doses*

#### 52

Tension and relaxation, concentration and paralysis, compression and lethargy characterize the ambivalence of ecstatic intoxication and its consciousness of life.

The possibility of excess is always given: *excedere* means “to escape”. Here is the rule that is abandoned. What is considered in practice to be excess, depends on the rule that, with the change of the environment, offers a more or less limited range of tolerance. In the world of technology, where clocks play an increasingly more important role, this tolerance has been reduced: the machine does not consent to any escape, regardless of how brief it may be, from measurable time. It demands asceticism and does not allow drugs to be consumed for pleasure. To the contrary: whenever drugs are consumed, it must be for the purpose of reinforcing normality. This is the case with most of the capsules and tablets that are intended to treat psychological and physical disorders.

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<sup>26</sup> See Section 197 and our note on the veiled allusion to the Napoleonic “*consomption forte*” in *The Adventurous Heart*.



Strictly speaking, the words “escape” and “exceed” mean an abandonment of normal time. Such a possibility becomes more problematic as the rule of the empire of the clocks grows stronger. It is still the same time, which sometimes plunges into an abyss and at other times expands like the surface of a changeless mirror, and it is the same spirit that modulates time as a form of its representation. Time becomes its object, its plaything, beyond the “clock where the same hour eternally strikes”.<sup>27</sup> This explains the extraordinary and unusual states of consciousness, the sudden onset of serenity that flows over the intoxicated person, but also the malaise that follows excess. In those states of consciousness, not only are pleasure and the life force taken for granted, but, above all, time is borrowed and consumed in advance, without worrying about whether it is concentrated or expanded.

Furthermore, the path trodden in the state of ecstatic intoxication is also associated with the memory of an intense feeling of being alive. It is associated less with the uniqueness of the *tempi* as with that of the keys: with the changing times, spaces also became accessible with unknown images and visions.

## 53

The evocation of that way of feeling life is linked to a longing to experience it once again: that atmosphere of festive exaltation and enthusiasm. The latter must be interspersed with pauses; here, too, the motto of the “treasure hunter” holds true.<sup>28</sup> One can make long journeys at a walk or a trot, but not at a gallop. When this longing leads to addiction, the intervals are abbreviated; this hastens the onset of exhaustion.<sup>29</sup>

The German word *Sucht*, which means “addiction”, is related to the verb *suchen*, which means “to seek”; etymologically, its meaning is derived from the Gothic *siukan*, that is, “to be sick”, as is still reflected in our *siech* and the English *sick*. As is the case with many other words, with this one, too, we must keep in mind not only its historical meaning, but also the meaning that is suggested by the magic of its sound; here, the realm of the poet borders on that of the grammarian.

The duration of this interval is variable; if we contemplate this process with respect to drugs we see that it is conditioned by, among other things, their toxic effects. The minor euphoria derived from smoking tobacco can be repeated after a few minutes. According to Wilde, a cigarette provides a perfect pleasure, without ever being fully satisfied; a table

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<sup>27</sup> Schiller.

<sup>28</sup> An allusion to Goethe’s ballad, “The Treasure Hunter” (*Der Schatzgräber*), written in 1797, whose final stanza is as follows: “‘Pure life’s courage drink!’ cried he: / ‘This advice to prize then learn,-- / Never to this place return / Trusting in thy spells absurd; / Dig no longer fruitlessly. / Guests by night, and toil by day! / Weeks laborious, feast-days gay! / Be thy future magic-word!’”.

<sup>29</sup> An untranslatable play on words involving “nostalgia” (*Sehnsucht*), “addiction” (*Sucht*) and the verb “to seek” (*suchen*).

at the café is frequented almost daily for decades; various acquaintances meet, who know “their dose”; even a considerable dose does not prevent older people from joining in.

Religious festivals in which drugs play a major role are celebrated only once every two or three years. The impact of these festivals can be so intense that the participant does not yearn for their repetition. As we have already pointed out, in remote epochs wine possessed an extraordinary power, but it has long since been subjected to a process of domestication. There are sensitive natures, however, over whom it still wields its old power. In this respect, these individuals remain in an infantile state. Their sensitivity does not necessarily imply a physical weakness. To the contrary, it is all the more dangerous when it coincides with a robust constitution.

## 54

A friend of mine from the years after the First World War—I shall call him Kramberg—possessed, even in his external appearance, that primordial force that was even more powerfully expressed in repose than in motion. With the body of an athlete, he also had a face that was both intrepid and intelligent: this is how Bernard Shaw, for example, described the boxer, Cashel Byron. His eroticism was evident; I felt it when I was sitting next to Kramberg in a bar. In such places, it was quite a common occurrence for a girl to whisper to her friends, “Look, over there on the right, next to the door, what a handsome man”. Such signs were not necessary here; Kramberg’s presence attracted attention discreetly, but irresistibly: an admiration that did not seem to surprise him, but which he accepted as a deserved tribute.

It will always be a matter of note that those who are endowed with such a favorable outward appearance are often much less successful than their comrades who are not so gifted in that respect. If one also takes fame into account, such as that enjoyed by actors, then the outlook is even less promising. The more easily we are puffed up by a stroke of good luck, the more easily are we brought down by failure. Byron—I am now referring to the poet—embodies that type of child born under a good star. The divorcee who fed on his substance is almost always concealed behind the background of his life.

Kramberg did not talk much about himself. After leaving home in search of adventure, he took a low-level civil service job, with a modest wage considering the lifestyle to which he was accustomed. He was obliged to pay more attention to his apparel and to take up *culture physique*. In the evenings, he would often engage in gymnastics while naked in his room and also work out with an elastic band to strengthen his muscles. Despite the fact that he had observed that, at that hour of the night, certain female neighbors were looking out of their windows, watching him with binoculars, he was not very concerned; which was entirely consistent with his exhibitionist tendencies.

Despite his arrogant and provocative demeanor, I was surprised to discover that he never touched so much as a drop of alcohol, not even beer, which was quite weak in those days. At first I just thought he was a skinflint, but then he also declined every offer to buy him

a couple of glasses of beer. Once, when it came up in conversation, he told me the reason for his abstinence.

At the age of sixteen, his friends invited him to drink for the first time, and he succumbed to a maniacal state, of which he had no memory, but which lasted several days, during which anything was possible. In fact, there was something he wanted to hide about his past; but he never went into details. In one minute, a whole life can easily be destroyed. In any case, he had promised his mother, as she was on her knees before him, that he would in the future spurn not just the bottle, but even the first glass.

## 55

Such cases, in which an extreme sensitivity and a strong constitution coexist and in which excitation is powerfully inflamed, are rare, but never cease to re-emerge, especially in individuals and social groups in a state of nature. In myths we find testimonies, such as the Homeric description of the wedding of Pirithous, which concluded in drunkenness, rage, homicide and rape:

The great *Eurytion* when this frenzy flung,  
*Pirithous*’ roofs with frantic riot rung;  
Boundless,  
Boundless the *Centaur* rag’d; ’till one and all  
The Heroes rose, and dragg’d him from the hall;  
His nose they shortened, and his ears they slit,  
and sent him sober’d home, with better wit.<sup>30</sup>

This episode in the hall of Pirithous provides the archetype for all those altercations that combine ecstatic intoxication and brute force, including those that the judge must break up after adjourning a *kermesse*. In ancient Frisia, the betrothed couple arrived at their wedding banquet dressed in burial shrouds. It is not at all surprising that Theseus and, above all, Heracles, should have set about to restore order; what is surprising is the fact that this constituted one of the features that would herald a new kind of rule. There is no question about it: myth derives much more from chance than history: the former offers ideas, while the latter only records events.

The Thessaly of old where the wedding of the Lapiths was celebrated is shrouded in mystery and, at a later time, it was still famous as the place where witches and sorcerers plied their magical arts. Like Colchis, Phrygia, Mysia and Lydia, Thessaly was home to peoples who had resided in those lands long before the time of Herodotus, and in such places we find the splendor and the horror of the telluric power manifested side by side. Heroic morality and clan law ruled there since ancient times, and was still in effect when people no longer lived in forests, mountains and caves. Thessalos, its first king, the son of Jason and Medea, was one of the siblings who escaped their cruel mother.

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<sup>30</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, Book XXI [lines 317-322, from Pope’s translation published in 1745].

At the banquet, the cup was passed by heroes and centaurs, in whom Homer almost always only recognized brute force. The centaurs were tamed or exterminated like lions and snakes; new laws and inequalities arose that still affect us today. A judge, whose face displays the scars of old duels, presides over the banquet, and proclaims harsh sentences against those who engage in drunken brawls.

Kramberg died young, which was surprising in view of his strong constitution, but was not really at all unusual. As long ago as the time of the great physician of antiquity, Celsus, one encounters in the latter's work the observation that the athletic lifestyle, while certainly increasing physical strength, does not, however, guarantee a long life.

## 56

The relation of the human being to ecstatic intoxication is one of great importance and it is legitimate that it should be the object of detailed regulations both in the educational system as well as in legislation. Here we find a range of heterogeneous possibilities extending from absolute prohibition, to restriction, to the toleration or even the promotion of the pleasures of ecstatic intoxication. A wide array of motives makes the picture even more confusing. The abstinence of late Protestantism in America and in the Nordic countries is quite unlike the kind of abstinence demanded in Islam. Mohammed himself represents an exemplary case of the type of spirit who, without need for any artificial means, was always susceptible to the supernatural. He was just as capable as Saint Anthony of abstaining from wine. The dervishes induce their ecstatic trances by way of pure movement. In fact, since time immemorial, dance has been a commonly recognized means to achieve spiritual rapture. Abstinence, such as the kind demanded by the Salvation Army and by Islam, is endowed with the same value, but in one case it derives from shortage and in the other from abundance. Hebbel depicted this quite well in his poem, "Die Odaliske".

## 57

As a general rule, the policies enforced by most governments send a mixed message with regard to drugs: on the one hand, they anathematize the stimulants, while, on the other hand, they depend on the industries that profit from the market in stimulants. This applies not just to tobacco and alcohol, but is increasingly more applicable to countless chemical compounds. Anyone who attends a dinner party may observe, as always, that glasses are constantly being emptied and ashtrays filled; one will also observe, however, more and more frequently, how pills or pill bottles are furtively passed from one hand to another under the table. Such indulgence is becoming so common that it is like helping oneself to the psychoactive candy dish.

The fact that one hand of the State does not know what the other hand is doing, and looks the other way, is nothing new. This oscillation between ethical considerations and economic interests is not limited to stimulants. This is the time-honored stance taken with respect to marginal and unsavory zones that are also lucrative, like games of chance and

prostitution. Together they form a unity, and it should not be surprising that whenever corruption begins to spread in a palace, the latter swarms with a throng of gamblers, women of the night, criminals and drug dealers. Then a rapid process of erosion sets in; yet a little corruption is of the essence of the State, just as a drop of oil is necessary for every axle. It has become proverbial in the *non olet* of Vespasian, who was one of the good emperors.

The fact that the scales have tipped in favor of persecution as opposed to tolerance is more notable today thanks to the growth of knowledge. Science always aspires to an infinitesimal precision; its gaze is directed at details that were previously hardly even suspected to exist. At the same time, the results are analyzed and quantified statistically. If, for example, it is proven by means of statistics that there is a relation between smoking cigarettes and the number of people diagnosed with lung cancer, it makes it hard to deny the implied responsibility.

The growth of knowledge is, in a way, atmospheric: quantification is one consequence among others. Photography can also help shed light in a rational way on things that, in the past, caused a vague discomfort. Naturally, the photographic image does not change the things themselves, but it does prove that consciousness has itself been transformed.

## 58

Thus, just as responsibility has many aspects, it would be imperfect if the opportunities for mischief were to be reduced. The traveler who sits at a table in a café in Cairo might conclude that the prophet had, with prohibition, performed a masterpiece: perfect abstinence, for centuries.

This same traveler, upon disembarking in Alexandria, would be jostled by crowds of street peddlers who would offer him everything from cigarettes to hashish, and even tinctures of Spanish Fly, among other drugs. An old objection against Mohammed's legislation is that, with the prohibition of alcohol, he thereby favored not only the use of opium and hashish, but also sexual promiscuity.

The fact that categorical prohibitions also have their drawbacks was also demonstrated during the Prohibition era in the United States by the unstoppable rise in crime and corruption. It is apparent that the human being has an urgent and unquenchable need not only for stimulants but also for intoxicating substances more generally. The solution foreseen by Bellamy in his *Looking Backward* (1888) therefore does not go to the heart of the matter. In his utopian world, extracts of a certain substance are added to food that imperceptibly neutralize the attraction of alcohol and suppress the need to consume it.

Bellamy's book is dominated by the error that the thirst of the drinker is a kind of physiological hunger for liquid. It would, of course, be easy to sate this hunger if something else was not concealed behind it, i.e.: the yearning for a more spiritual world. Like all metaphysical needs, *this* hunger is insatiable, and this explains the greed associated with it. We must also point out that rationing is opposed to the essence of

ecstatic intoxication. The latter issues from the storehouses of an ever-increasing abundance, it accompanies the metamorphoses of a world of festival.

### *Precocious Initiations*<sup>31</sup>

59

Usually, an adolescent gets mixed up with his first drinking binge the way he falls prey to his first amorous adventure: by chance. Such encounters deviate from the plan. The sanctuaries of Dionysius and Aphrodite could very well have been built in the precincts of the temple of Fortune.

In the Nordic countries, the god of wine is replaced by Gambrinus, the god of beer: a later addition to Olympus, and not exactly a fortunate one. Such figures arise wherever opulence has not declined, but its background has become nebulous. We see this Gambrinus in Dutch paintings. His spirit reigns over taverns, on life-size murals, in crowded markets and restaurants, and at banquets where a hale old man or king of the fools presides. Holland is surely only one of many regions of an immense landscape that can also offer profound visions. Thus, in *The Satyr and the Peasant Family* everything becomes magical, enchanted by the spirit of the earth, like the centaurs.

Every festival worthy of the name suggests an approach to mystery. How close this approach comes to its goal also depends on the host. The Bacchus of the Romans already entailed a reduction and a weakening compared to Dionysius. Not in vain did the songs of the troubadours so often evoke the combination, “Bacchus and Gambrinus”.

The keys that open the gates to initiation into the mysteries can be crude, or they can be subtle. In this respect, wine is incomparable; it provides the solemn complement to the needs of life, to our daily bread.

Mystery itself, however, is unitary, just as Aphrodite remains one and the same, regardless of her constantly arising new manifestations. The chamber is still dark; the human being can have access to what is hidden with the symbol, with other people, in gatherings. Even where one senses and feels unity, the latter is nothing but a parable of timeless powers in time.

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<sup>31</sup> Jünger uses the plural form of the term *Einstieg*, which literally means “rise” or “ascent”. On the other hand, however, the verb *einsteigen* also means to get into a vehicle, to board a train, for instance. This is why, in some contexts, we have translated it as “journey”. The expression *Einstiegsdroge*, however, designates “soft” drugs that are used by the consumer as a vehicle of initiation in order to later ascend to another type of substance that is allegedly stronger or harder. The “theory” that inspires this concept is unsustainable from a pharmacological point of view. See Arman Sahihi, *Drogen von A-Z. Ein Handwörterbuch*, Beltz, Basel, 1999, p. 57. [In English, of course, the term commonly used to describe these “soft” drugs is “gateway drugs”—American translator’s note].

This also applies to ecstatic intoxication. One cannot suspend time, but one can conduct the initiate to a new perspective of time, from which time would seem to accelerate or slow down in its passage. He approaches something stronger. Then, he is overcome by a state of joyful amazement that, like the response of the farmer's wife when she was visited by a satyr, also partakes of fear and sorrow. All of this is reflected in the faces of drinkers; and this is all the more striking in our era, which wants to be nothing but time, time and nothing more, nothing else.

Among the ranks of the gods who preside over festivals, Gambrinus is a crude entity, just as beer is a crude key. This testifies to the role that the dose, the "pure" substance, begins to play. Gambrinus is therefore not so much a descendant of the Olympians as of the Aesir, the eight Nordic gods, those prodigious drinkers of mead. Here we encounter, even in the distant past, the drinking bout as a degenerate form of the symposium. When Thor and his goats went to the enchanted castle of the giant Utgard-Loki and entered the great stronghold, they beheld a drinking horn as deep as the ocean, so that Thor drank the whole sea when he swallowed three great draughts from it.

As we have said, this kind of intoxication does not concern the mysteries. Even Valhalla and Olympus are nothing but stations along the way: allegories. And one can still hear something different in the taverns of Gambrinus, and wherever the Oktoberfest is celebrated, amidst the noise of the drunken crowd: the enigmatic character of the exhilaration bursts forth when the god Fro appears in person: here, too, approach and supervision meet.

## 60

We went on a camping trip in the mountainous region of the Weser: *Wandervögel*; it had to be around 1910, near Duisberg. Anyway, that morning we visited the monument to the Emperor. Our group, students from the Wunstorfer region, consisted of twelve vigorous boys. We had two guides; the first was called Werner, the second, Robby.

By that time, the *Wandervögel*<sup>32</sup> had developed into a group that was in part tolerated and in part encouraged by school administrators; in every high school there was a local chapter. Its ideals were vague, determined more by feelings than by facts, without academic, military or political purposes. "To be on the road": that is, wandering aimlessly, in the romantic manner, cooking your own food, sitting around a campfire, singing, camping in tents, spending nights in barns: in this way one gained more than one thing, but lost even more.

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<sup>32</sup> A Prussian version of the boy scouts, the *Wandervögel*—literally, "migrating birds", or "birds on the wing"—was a youth movement that arose around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which combined camping trips with nationalist ideology, a romantic nature cult, and the rejection of bourgeois morality.

For our current purposes the most relevant aspect of this phenomenon was the constant exchange of thoughts and opinions during the long hikes and right up until we fell asleep. Many of these conversations would last a whole lifetime: convictions that might only have been arrived at after long efforts, were obtained in sudden flashes. Hase, for example, an enthusiastic reader of Gerstäcker's novels, kept us up to date on his reading, in discussions in the darkness in barns. Once, after he had entertained us for a long time with his conversation, I wanted to carry on with our discussion, and I said, "*The Pirates of the Mississippi* is an excellent book, too", but Werner, who finally wanted to get some sleep, interrupted by saying, "That's enough of this nonsense! Gerstäcker is a skilled storyteller, but he lacks imagination".

Such summaries can save us a lot of work. Werner had, furthermore, good judgment combined with great vitality. "A goliard,<sup>33</sup> a daredevil", as it says in that song sung by the students of Prague. This does not mean, however, that he would put up with just any nonsense. The rough environment in which he had been raised also had a positive side. On the first day of our camping trip, we dined on beans, and Werner was angry with August Stiebitz, a little redheaded kid everyone called Fietje, because the kid would always let his farts fly without any qualms. He told him off: "Hey Fietje! Do you cut farts like that at home, too?". This did not make much of an impression on Fietje; he said, "Of course. My father says that there is nothing more dangerous than holding them in. That's how you get appendicitis".

Stiebitz's father was a distinguished physician, and a notorious cynic. It was said that, when he went on house calls, he used to put his finger in the bedpan and taste the urine. He was nonetheless one of the pillars of society. On the Emperor's birthday and on the anniversary of the Battle of Sedan, he attended the celebrations at the school dressed in the uniform of a naval chief medical officer.

Fietje also had a sister who was just as small and as red-haired as he was: Erika. As long as she lived she suffered from unexpected setbacks that caught her by surprise, but did not incapacitate her; and this is what happened to me, too, on this occasion. After the war, the elder Stiebitz had some kind of disagreement with us. He had moved to Berlin and opened up an office on a street that runs parallel to Potsdam Avenue. He was an excellent specialist in internal diseases; in everything that affected the gall bladder and the liver, his diagnoses verged on clairvoyance. Word of his medical practice spread, and it was not long before his waiting room, with its painting of Wilhelm II, was mobbed with more or less jaundiced patients.

"More than one would-be patient turned around and left immediately when they saw the crowd. It's better that way; when it comes right down to it, I can't split myself into four

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<sup>33</sup> At first, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the term "Goliard" was applied to sybaritic young priests and monks, most of whom were university students in France, Italy and Germany, who composed and performed irreverent, satirical poetry and plays; in the later Middle Ages, the word became synonymous with "wandering minstrel" or "jongleur" and lost its clerical connotations.



parts.” This was true, and because of the nature of his clientele, gut irregularities were certainly not exceptional. In his examination room he sat on a large couch, his back to the window: “More than one bomb has exploded here.” As a type of person with a mixture of sensitive and crude traits, he was not exactly a rarity; this type is frequently encountered among physicians: the almost proverbial taste for music that is characteristic of surgeons is exemplified very clearly here.

## 61

I only saw Fietje once after the days of our camping trips; naturally, he, too, had enlisted in the navy and was always at sea. When I asked him about Erika, I noticed that I had touched a sore spot: “She’ll be the death of her father.” He went on to recount a whole soap opera, mostly involving her lowlife friends, especially a consumptive poet who wrote bad poetry. “When these elements are out of town, she won’t even respond to our words. Today it happened again, at noon; she curled up like a hedgehog next to the table and did nothing but stare off into space. Now the old man won’t eat a thing. At least mother isn’t here to see this.”

Then we talked about his own problems; they were of a political nature. He was traveling on a mission for the Consul Organization, and was therefore one of its agents in the navy. When I asked him about his mission, he replied: “I cannot tell you; you will find out soon enough.” He was incapable of keeping the secret, however: “First, we will overthrow your basket-maker”. He said “your basket-maker”, because he knew that I would understand that he was referring to the Minister of Defense. Therefore, this must have been shortly before the Kapp Putsch.

So much for my little digression about how the distinguished old physician transmitted, in accordance with Mendel’s laws, his liberal and his conservative genes. The historical context must have had something to do with it. At that time, in the mountainous region of the Weser, we had not yet even begun to suspect the course that would be taken by events. Thus, Werner was off-target with his reprimand, and had to change his tone: “Fietje, I do not want to know about your family’s business. But if you are going to cut one, then yell ‘*nuntio!*’ so that we know.”

The advice seemed to be Solomonic, but it was like escaping from the frying pan only to fall into the fire, since every time Fietje said “*nuntio!*” was an occasion for jokes. There was no end to the shouts of “*nuntio!*”, the curses and the howls of laughter. It got so bad that Werner abolished its use that same day.

## 62

As I said, Werner’s coarse nature had a pedagogical aspect, too; it also included “cultural tours”. He called attention to the fact that we were almost totally ignorant about how the objects and materials we use everyday were made, and he did not consider himself an exception. Cultural tours were supposed to remedy this shortcoming without delay. We had already gone to a spinning mill, a cement factory and a water purification plant,

where, once Werner had presented his request, we were welcomed and given a friendly tour. Here, too, in the vicinity of the Wittekind Mountain, he felt the spur, after breakfast, of the cultural impulse. We still had a short walk to where we had previously planned to spend the night. Down below, along the bank of the river, there was a factory with tall smokestacks, a deserted-looking building whose bricks were stained black with soot. He probably had some ulterior motive for wanting to go there.

We walked down the hillside and entered through a gate that led to a deserted courtyard. Our group—with our guitars and mandolins, we constituted a “proper band”—attracted the attention of some workers. When Werner told them that we had come on a cultural tour, they did not seem to know just what to do with us; then one fellow broke out into laughter and exclaimed: “They just want to drink beer!” He nonetheless disappeared into the office and reported our arrival.

So, we had come to a brewery, and it was not long before the director, now informed of our purpose, came to meet us. I am not sure whether one of the words that was then fashionable in student jargon, *schmissig*, “snazzy”, comes from *Schmiss*, “scar”; anyway, this term, which is still in use, fit this director’s appearance to a T, even if he was somewhat fat and had a bald spot on the top of his head. It was obvious that he was quite bored with his job, and our visit provided the occasion for a pleasant break from the routine. This idea seemed to take hold of him and he offered us his personal services as a guide.

Then we saw, in various buildings, huge copper vats and cauldrons for manufacturing beer, machines for grinding and shredding, pumps, conveyor belts and sorting machines; we even climbed up to the ovens where the malted barley and hops were dried. We heard words like “brewer’s yeast” and “lees”, “green malt”, “barley froth” and “dextrin”, and we were also informed of the differences between the English, the Bohemian and the Bavarian methods of brewing beer. There were various brews, among which, the first produced strong beer, and the second, light monastery beer. The climate of Munich was especially favorable for the art of making beer; in March the conditions were at their best. This explained the fame of spring beer. Bock beer had nothing to do with the goat from which its name in German was taken; the word recalled a strong beer that was first produced in Einbeck. Mumme beer, on the other hand, the naval beer of Brunswick, still bears the name of its original brewer.<sup>34</sup> The director expressed his hope that it would be a good year for hops. Attempts to manufacture preserved extracts of the hop plant were showing some promise. We were informed of these and other details while we stood around the machines or while we were walking up and down stairs.

## 63

After seeing how beer is made, it was only fair that we should taste a sample, too. Our tour concluded in a lounge in the administrative building. There, chairs had been

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<sup>34</sup> Mumme, a malt beer that has borne the name of its brewer, Christian Mumme, since 1489.

arranged around a table decorated with a representative of the *lares*: a rough standard bearer, with the emblem of the brewery. The walls were covered with certificates, on which the outlines of endless rows of smokestacks were depicted, as if they would go on forever in geometric progression towards an imaginary point.

The director issued various orders. We were served a tray of cigars and cigarettes, and they also brought us several cases full of bottles of beer. A few minutes later, we were sitting down at the table around a case of beer with the brewmaster. Werner left to get his guitar; as he often said, now was the time for some laughter, if not for a little “ruckus”.

It was a stifling, hot day, but in the lounge a cool breeze circulated. Our host began the tasting with a light summer beer, in order to move on from there to the stronger varieties produced for export. At first, we drank with a natural thirst; then we drank with that other thirst that flourishes when one has already put away a few bottles, and we did not have to be asked twice when the director called for a song. We knew the whole *Zupfgeigenhansl* anthology by heart. The first song, undoubtedly not very appropriate for the spirit of the place, was, as always, the “Traveling Companion”:

Today I quench my thirst with the waters of a mountain spring,  
tomorrow I will quench my thirst with the wine of the Rhine....

The second song was more in tune with the place:

There rises the mountain of Kyffhäuser  
in the middle of Germany  
at its heart sleeps the powerful emperor:  
his name was Frederick Barbarossa.

Other songs followed, including the song about the battle of the Teutoberger Forest. It was in this region that Varus was dealt a defeat that lasted a millennium. Werner also knew some little ditties that were a little more spicy, without actually being obscene, as long as the spirit of the group put him in the mood. One such song was about the three happy-go-lucky lumberjacks, and another was about the little skylark—funny songs that he sang in a high-pitched voice, accompanied by the lute.

My wife, the little Skylark,  
tweet la la ra,  
in the church cut a fart,  
tweet la la ra,  
the priest came running:  
Skylark, this time your song is off-key!

The director sang, too, with a deep voice. He liked ballads such as the song about the heroic mayor who saved his city; tossing back a big glass, he sang:

The fortress of Rothenburg,

rising from the bank of the Tauber,  
resisting the fierce Tilly  
for several months now.

It did not take long for a very genial atmosphere to prevail; we took delight in each other's company. Until that day, I hardly ever drank beer; to me it seemed to be a bitter, insipid, nasty beverage. Then, suddenly, everything was different: my thirst, but also the group, had changed its flavor. At the same time, unsuspected energies were released. I made some singular observations.

It would have been more fitting to use the word "perceptions" than "observations" in this context. The difference between observation and perception is like the difference between the fisherman and the fish: the fisherman observes the bait; the fish perceives it. It is undoubtedly advisable, as I have attempted here, to transform our perceptions into observations, thanks to subsequent reflection. If we then succeed in transforming observation as well, we shall see both the fisherman as well as the fish from the distance of contemplation.

For perception is already effectively accompanied by thought. They are inextricably associated, and like thought, perception is also affected by illusions. That is how I succumbed to a typical logical error. Concretely, while I thought that we were sitting down and drinking because we were enjoying ourselves and we were thirsty, basically I had it backwards. We had already been in high spirits all day, since at that age it does not take much to make you happy. The drink had only favored a particular state of mind and a thirst of another kind. The threshold that separated a drink or two from getting blind drunk was almost imperceptible.

## 64

I had always admired Werner; he was sitting, with his shirt unbuttoned, next to the director: strong, vibrant, with reddish-blond hair, a type of human being one sees in ancient paintings and sculpture, and is still frequently seen in the Celtic countries. The role of chief seemed to have been written just for him; it fit him like a glove. His demeanor was both self-confident and courteous, he manifested physical and spiritual superiority. In addition, he possessed a natural grace. Perhaps I would also have been capable of articulating a response or a judgment with the same grace, but I would have needed more time to formulate it: besides, I lacked the firm resolve with which he expressed his views. In his presence, agreeing with him became a pleasure.

Such characters embody our most cherished dreams. We see them and listen to them as if a part of us had broken away and appeared on the stage before us. There, at the brewery, I experienced that feeling of sympathy in a very special way, and even the director was affected by it, who listened to Werner with pleasure. He impressed us with his elegance, while we impressed him with our good behavior. On the table in front of him was a cigarette case engraved with his name. Every time he took a cigarette from the case, he gave it a little tap with his finger before lighting it. As he lit his cigarette, the flame

illuminated a blue jewel on his hand, in a setting emblazoned with a coat of arms. His beer stein also featured the same coat of arms embossed in enamel, under the firm's motto: "Let this be our standard!"

I have forgotten just what the standard looked like; the colors of the coat of arms were the same as those of the pennon attached to his watch chain. Everything was harmonious: and there were the scars: a totemic spirit, born after his time. This was a man who felt comfortable in his skin, and who knew what was his due; which one could see by the way he gave orders. They were, rather, desires that corresponded to a friendly relation of authority: desires, concerning whose fulfillment there could be no hesitation. For example: "Krause, could you perhaps...?"

Krause was the master brewer, a cheerful type who knew how to make us laugh, which would not have taken much effort in any case. When he took a little sip, he would say, for example: "To your health, Krause, I would very much like to drink a toast with you", and before a big swallow: "Look out below, my dear soul, there's going to be a downpour". The director must have heard all of his quips many times; he barely cracked a smile.

Krause was constantly taking new bottles from the case, inviting us to drink, and also to have a smoke. He was probably rubbing his hands together in glee when we were not looking. He drank nonstop; thirst seemed to be his natural state. His boss also emptied a few steins and did so with a style that left no room for doubt that he had a lot of practice. He had a way of drinking that one might call casual: he drank the beer in one swallow, without effort, without moving his Adam's Apple: the liquid passed through the swallowing apparatus without a pause. Similarly, when the revels became louder, he remained motionless in his chair; he was accustomed to presiding over banquets.

## 65

Not everyone experienced the same pleasant feelings in this new situation, and some were even seriously irritated. Thus, Robby, our second-in-command, became increasingly more disagreeable the longer our little get together lasted. Not only did he just sit there with a frown on his face, and without so much as touching a drop of beer, but he also tried to prevent us from drinking and blamed Werner above all for our going astray. The greater our jubilation, the more sullen he became.

To be fair, he was right, it was one of the rules of those hiking clubs: during outings one was permitted neither to drink alcohol nor to smoke. Although we still sang their Dionysian songs, this abstinence distinguished us from our predecessors, the Bacchantes, who, naturally, were a little older than us. So Robby's protest was not unjust. Even so, this beer-tasting was a justified exception to the rule. I had always considered him to be a pedant, whose greatest aspiration was that nothing should "happen" during the trip; it made him so mad I thought he would faint, with his wrinkled nose, as if he had smelled a foul odor. When Werner rebuked him, he walked out and rid us of his spoilsport presence.

Now, when I recall the figure of Robby, it seems to me that he was possessed by an unusual zeal for order. As he often said, he liked to dot his i's. It was undoubtedly not by chance that he was interested in orthography. He was obsessed with the dots. In his view, they were used far too often; he persecuted the superfluous dots. When the train departed from the station—we were in a fourth class compartment “for passengers with heavy baggage”, where we were always kept under close observation—Robby devoted himself to reading the notices posted on the walls of the compartment. He took out a pen and began to mark up the dots with a pedagogical zeal; the first fell already after the word “Notice”. He also had all kinds of objections to the semicolon. He deemed it a hybrid. Thirty years later, I read something similar in Valéry, who, indeed, also had in common with Robby the fact that he was a good mathematician. He found alcoholic beverages repulsive, without exception, as substances that were harmful to the nature of life. Unfermented fruit juice was healthy, digestible and tastes better.

## 66

Back to the brewery: then I saw my comrades more clearly; they expressed themselves more frankly and with greater enthusiasm. Whether speaking or silent, we were closely united in an immediate understanding. It was quite surprising, as if you did not see a punch was aimed at you until it hit you. The cavalryman is quite familiar with this state; he might have been riding a horse for a whole year and suddenly he understands what it means to ride.

We can read a letter at the same time that we follow its sentences and the thoughts they express; but we can also look it over, without seeing words or syllables, but only the author's handwriting style. Then, the writer of the letter seems to suddenly appear as if from out of a forest or from behind a fence. We see that only *he* constitutes the real content of the letter, not the message.

I do not mean to imply that our conversation was more brilliant. To the contrary. The lively and enthusiastic turn taken by our conversation did not depend on reason, but on that harmony that, like a universal force, reconciles all things, just as the wind blows on everything and the sun shines on everything. Thus, with drunkenness, the futility and the inconsistency of the conversation increase, at least from the point of view of those who are not directly involved. In fact, the rhyme must not be sought in the words, but in the harmony. Since the sober man does not participate in that harmony, the festival seems strange to him or, as it did to our second-in-command Robby, annoying.

## 67

Soon, other considerations began to occupy my attention. That sharpened sense of sight, which up until then was directed at my comrades, was now focused on objects. The floor was made of paving stones; they came from the red sandstone of the mountains, just like the monument that we had visited that morning. On this red floor, a case full of bottles of beer stood out. You only had to open them, the white stoppers glistened. There were twenty-five: five times five. I counted them several times: how could an odd number

form a square? Of course, one could take any number of bottles from each side. But don't you need four somewhere to form a square?

A paradox of this kind had never before occurred to me: I did not like math, and since it hardly interested me at school, I found it very strange that I should be thinking about mathematical questions in my private life. And here I was, face to face, by chance, and without any training, with a point of intersection where geometry and arithmetic came into contact, with the primacy of measurement over calculation, of space over time. More important than the confrontation with this problem was the encounter, which was more universal, with the evidence: with the intuitive force from which our questions and our knowledge bursts forth.

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While I was engrossed in contemplation of the twenty-five white ceramic stoppers, the party continued on its course. There was undoubtedly some discord. Krause appeared with a bottle of schnapps and some shot glasses on a tray, but the director refused it with a gesture. Nor did he like it when his factotum told dirty jokes. Fietje got up and left the room; when he came back, he was as white as a ghost and his forehead was beaded with sweat. The director took a look at his watch on its fob. It was time to go. Werner began singing the song that we always sang when it was time to say goodbye:

Goodbye, good night,  
the party comes to an end  
so now I have to go.

Our tour had come to an end. We thanked the director, we hoisted our backpacks and departed, still in good condition. The forest was not far away; only when we got into the woods did we begin to feel the effect of an unaccustomed pleasure. The air in the bar had concentrated it. Fietje had to vomit again; he was nearly in a state of collapse. Werner unbuttoned Fietje's shirt and put a wet rag on his chest. He had brought along a first aid kit.

The sunlight gleamed obliquely through the crowns of the trees. We threw ourselves down on the moss, overcome by weariness. It was somewhat reminiscent of the old Bacchantes, whose wild feasts in the forests only began after drinking with the peasants until nightfall, when they frolicked with the farmhands in the hay.

## 69

When we awoke, hung over, it was already late in the evening. There was nothing for us to do but to look for a place to stay for the night. This was not hard and we usually succeeded on our first attempt. The farmer, who had almost always served in the military, ordinarily received us with hospitality and let us stay in his barn. It often happened that, at the same farm, we were even treated to conversation, bread and cold cuts.

It was already dark when we came to a large farm isolated in a clearing. A dog followed us, barking. We had to yell at the door of the farmhouse for a long time, until the door opened and the farmer looked us over. The encounter got off on the wrong foot right from the start. Because of the dog's barking, Werner spoke in a louder voice than usual, and was obliged to shout louder and louder, because the farmer did not seem to understand what we wanted from him. The farmer never stopped asking: "What do you want?", and this query gradually took on a more threatening tone. And his dog was also getting more and more furious. Finally, he shouted to his son or his servant: "Hinnerk, come here! And bring the bat with you!" The time had come to hit the road.

We did not stop until we had gone quite a distance into the woods. We formed a circle. Under the light of the moon, I examined the faces of my comrades in the murky darkness. Our morale was very bad. Our musical instruments and our decorative feathers took on a mournful look. The romantic atmosphere had evaporated. Perhaps, for that reason, we found ourselves closer to the reality of the old vagabonds, who might have been chased away from the farm and beaten with sticks. We had to resign ourselves to having been knocked down a notch in the class system. And besides our weariness, we had to face the crisis of our command structure, which had already reared its head during our tour of the brewery. Werner was beside himself with rage:

"What a wicked beast! Have you ever seen such a thing! No one has ever treated us like that."

Robby's time had come. He finally gave free rein to the secret anger that had long been seething within him:

"There's nothing odd about it, because you should never ask anyone a question in that tone of voice. And besides, you stink of schnapps. That good man was right. He thought we were bums. We can consider ourselves lucky that we got away safe and sound."

Werner could hardly object to this; except for the reference to schnapps, which Robby only added to drive home his accusation that we had shamed ourselves. Werner refused to make any excuses. He said: "Robby, you are right, as always; I have been negligent. You take command; as punishment I shall march all night."

After saying this, he got ready to hit the road. We heard him in the darkness, singing one of his songs:

The tinker waves his hat,  
goodbye!, goodbye, Miss!, the repair job was good.

However, no one wanted to leave him in the lurch. We ran up to him, we surrounded him and even had to beg him to get permission to march at his side. All of us wanted to go with him, even Fietje, although he had terrible pains in his legs. Not even Robby dared to stand aside and let him go.



It was a long night; we advanced at marching pace through Bückeburg and Stadthagen towards Wunstorf. Marching was the right word, since it was hard work. In the wee hours of the morning, once the dawn glimmered on the horizon, I experienced, for the first time, those visions that might be called the magic of exhaustion: dreams of endless avenues, the ecstatic intoxication of the sleepless night. There were no more creases in our pants; we found ourselves on the outskirts of Dahomey. Then the landscape turned into palaces of perfect symmetry. There were lanterns, lamps, wreaths, and glittering garlands in the windows. The fences and hedgerows were transformed; in the light of dawn, paths seemed to be transfigured into crystalline rivers. Not long ago, this was a pond with fish and water lilies; now, it is a highway with cars and trucks. It was dangerous; one had to hold one's breath. Now and then we suddenly woke up with our aching feet pounding on the pavement. That is how the bird perches when it lands. At those times, exhaustion was overcome, as if a dam had been opened, and only then did the real energy flow.

## 70

The low tide is even more uplifting than the high tide. A world where weakness liberates unsuspected forces is announced and thus our vision is transformed. It is certainly an upside-down world but one that nonetheless points towards a world of an absolutely different kind. Such is the atmosphere of the antechambers: in dim light, suffused with clouds, but through the gaps in the clouds a new splendor peeks through.

The thought is reassuring: danger is always present. When in the lifeboats of shipwrecked sailors the last hope has been lost, these voices and images begin to play their game in the state of exhaustion; they deceive the thirsty man with the illusion that the water of the sea is delicious and they trick the dying man into thinking that salvation lies at the bottom of the ocean. Yes, mirages, but, in a certain sense, also a game of reflections: allusions to an inexhaustible wealth, but, at the same time, to something much heavier, which bends or bulges: the dark valley, the border wall, or the reefs of the Great Barrier Reef.

The volunteer who was ordered by the Emir Musa to scale the wall of the City of Brass clapped his hands when he reached the top and shouted, "Thou art beautiful!". Then he cast himself down and broke all his bones when he hit the ground. But the Emir Musa said: "This is the action of the rational. How then will the insane act?"

The mirage also has its reality. Its deception consists only in its false location. Its location is unknown; a cheap imitation passes itself off as a masterpiece of which it is nothing but a simulacrum.

The danger increases with the altitude, it increases for the fearful and the gullible. "In order to climb up to my royal brow, the strongest ascend upon the flutings of my bandelets as upon the steps of a stairway. Then a great lassitude comes upon them, and they fall backward." Such are the words of the Sphinx in *The Temptations of Saint Anthony*.

My reminiscences have led me much further afield than I had anticipated. Our first contact with ecstatic intoxication familiarizes us with its world of light and shadow. Like the flame that provides both heat and light, but which can also blind and burn. It slips past the strongholds and the borders and takes them by surprise; the intoxicated person is like Breughel's peasants, who stare open-mouthed at the wonder of the world. On the one hand, objects and human beings are perceived more distinctly and appear to be closer, maybe too much closer, and, on the other hand, the opening up of new perspectives makes them withdraw to a great distance. Ecstatic intoxication brings us closer to the borders of time, not only to this or that ephemeral subdivision of time, but to its mystery and, in this way, we almost experience a close encounter with death. That is where the danger lies, with respect to which every physical threat is nothing but a ghostly apparition. We may agree with Calderón by defining life as a dream, but it is even more accurate to conceive it as a state of intoxication, as one of the sublime states of the decomposition of matter.

I shall now attempt to recall what became of the leaders of the group. The older we get, the more we are able to follow people's biographies to the end; we see the figure of destiny and, along with it, the consummation of that which the astrologer believed he could know in advance.

Werner proved to be a disappointment to me when we met again after the war; this is often the case when we meet people we admired when we were young. We saw in them, above all, what we lacked; often, it was only a matter of two or three years of experience: they were just a couple years ahead of us in maturity. Perhaps they also seduced us because back then they were at their peak. While one yields late fruit, the other has already shot his bolt during the flower of his youth.

More than twenty years had passed since we had seen each other, but now and then I heard news about him, and he occasionally heard news about me. The old comrades of the *Wandervögel* were almost always quite lax when it came to keeping in touch with each other, like a net through which the current flows, even though it was not intact. When, by night, regimental columns were marching along strategic routes in foreign countries, names were shouted and greetings were exchanged. And even today, when I go to visit the house of Theo Oppermann in Wunstorf, I meet two or three comrades and they tell me their old stories. They take their guitars down from the wall and sing:

And then we went far away  
from our duke at a gallop,  
on horseback, on his "grenadier".  
Here we are, jolly soldiers of Hannover.

Or we sang:

And to the King of Prussia  
we want to tell him four things....

and other songs of the same kind. They have survived skirmishes and civil wars since 1866; they are snapshots of times past.

The minute Werner came into my room, I knew that something had happened to him. He had hardly even sat down, when he started to tell me about his problems. According to the doctors' diagnosis, it was a disorder of the pituitary gland. Even though this organ is hardly as big as a cherrystone, Werner had accumulate an encyclopedic knowledge of the subject; he was an inexhaustible source. His curiosity increased because his right to receive a disability pension depended on his diagnosis. In such cases, conversations assume the form of defense pleadings before an imaginary court.

To distract him a little, I asked him about our old comrades; however, he was hardly interested in talking about them at all. Only when I mentioned the name of Robby, did I notice that he was still very sensitive about this subject:

"He always found some excuse to cause trouble; such pedants are nothing but spoilsports. And you know where they end up: in the madhouse."

I had heard other rumors of that kind. Robby insisted he was right with respect to one of our political transitions; and he undoubtedly was right. I do not remember if he refused to raise the flag or if he lowered it at an opportune moment. In any case, he was imprisoned immediately and then committed to a madhouse.

In these times, to be born with a subtle understanding of the law is a perilous gift.

### ***Beer and Wine I***

73

During my high school years, I went on other excursions like those in the mountainous regions of the Weser. I was a member of the rowing club in high school. Perhaps my romantic attachment to the idea of the goliard was not enough for me, and I was so tired of all the singing that, whenever I could get away with it, I buried my voice in the chorus. It is likely that my bunkmates, robust oarsmen all, simply "captivated" me. There were four of them; they could not so easily do without me, since I was the fifth oar. The oldest boy, "Long Heini", was more than two meters tall. He died in Picardy. A bullet in the head; the trenches were not made for giants.

I felt little inclination for rowing, which I associated largely with military training; my activity was limited to kayak trips along the tributaries of the Weser and in the pools at the boathouse, where I spent a lot of my free time. We drank regularly and methodically; once a week we went to the Bremer Schlüssel tavern, a renowned establishment. At five,

after dinner, we left the Rhedenhof, as our dormitory was called. We were back, more or less plastered, at eleven. We were not allowed on the streets after eleven; it was against school regulations.

The good cheer of our beer-drinking evenings was regulated by the traditional rites of the goliards; their observance was enforced by the President, at the head of the table, and the Chief of the Novices, at the end of the table. Both carried ceremonial daggers, which they would pound on the table to get our attention. The songs, and all kinds of ceremonies, such as the “salamander”,<sup>35</sup> were performed after an obligatory *silentium*; the latter was immediately followed by a festive ritual, the *fidelitas*. We drank from tankards.

Sometimes a large stein was also passed around the table. It was shaped like a boot; it always had to be filled and, as it was passed around, the next-to-last person who had it in his hand before it was drained had to buy the next round. When the beer was gone, we had to drink shots of liquor, or toss down a glass of liquor in one swallow. If any was spilled, the perpetrator was “bled” and also had to pay for the round. There were various fouls that were punished with having to drain a larger or smaller mug. This was called “entering the mug”.<sup>36</sup> We often invited other students and old friends from other schools to our gatherings. They praised our immoderate passion.

These nocturnal sessions did not break the rules; not only were they benevolently tolerated by the professors, but they were viewed favorably. Almost all the professors were presumed to have been members of such student associations. In the universities those who did not join student groups of this kind, who were known as savages, were stigmatized as remnants of times when each individual, outside of the group of his fellow countrymen, was defenseless. This institution still manifested a complex of relations that not only hearkened back to the feudal era, but even to the times of the tribes, with their totems and taboos, their colors and their tattoos, brotherhoods of blood and ceremonies. But we must not stray from our theme, ecstatic intoxication. In any event, our drinking binges awakened in the older people a pleasure that was perhaps similar to that of an Indian who sees children playing with bows and arrows.

The taverns on the outskirts of town were off-limits, that is, we were forbidden to go to the neighboring villages that had bars where you could grab a bite to eat and empty a keg. Since these bars enjoyed a particularly attractive reputation, we took the risk of going to them at least once a year, but we always ended up being discovered, not because of our binge at the bar, but because of the mischief that accompanied our return to the dormitory, leaving a trail of vandalism. I still have fond memories of those two or three escapades, however. At that age, clandestine excess is more natural than the authorized student activities.

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<sup>35</sup> A ritual that consisted of tracing a circle on the table three times with the bottom of the beer mug before drinking.

<sup>36</sup> “*In die Kanne gehen!*” was an order proclaimed in the student associations for drinking as a group from the stein.

No memory is without melancholy. I am reflecting on a band of young men who were between sixteen and nineteen years old, with uniforms that were for the most part too tight; on their activities, their expressions and their Bacchic rites that adhered to the most rigid formalities. They thought that certain customs that had long been unfashionable were still valid, and even ahead of their time. Nonetheless, the *Wandervögel* had enjoyed greater freedom, even if their romanticism was unsatisfactory.

These incidents are only of interest to me because of their connection with my experiences of ecstatic intoxication. And I must confess that they were not very rewarding experiences. Walking from one tavern to another does not have to lead to ecstatic intoxication, but it does increase the pleasure of being with your friends. All that walking made us thirsty and then we wanted something to drink. The drink had to be light and pleasant, and we had to be able to drink a lot of it; in this respect, beer has no equal; later, you have to change course and think, for example, of tea. There is no doubt that, with respect to our theme, the enjoyment of, and the ritual associated with, tea, as described in Okakura Kakuzo, are of an incomparably more spiritual nature. If beer is associated with a lot of people shouting at the same time, tea suggests tranquil silence during the pauses in a pleasant conversation. In addition, tea is well-suited to the solitary nature of nocturnal studies and meditation, and even facilitates them. It does not constrain the spirit in any way, it introduces no strange images, but accompanies the spirit in its improvised variations, like a musical instrument and the melody. One cannot say the same thing about coffee, which can act, in a much more powerful way, like a drug.

## 74

A border that is not always very well defined separates the beer-drinking countries from the wine-drinking countries. It is determined by the mild climate, not too cold and not too hot, where the wine-grape thrives. Within this zone there are, in turn, countries where its cultivation has acquired an extraordinary refinement. For such refinement, there must be a perfect harmony with the elements: the situation of the river valleys and the mountain slopes, the soil, the water, sunlight, and conditions relating to cosmic and elemental forces. The spirit of the place also makes its contribution. Rocky soils are not only important because of the way they decompose and create the layer of humus, but also due to their capacity to reflect and absorb light like the slate of the Rhineland or the lava of Vesuvius. Its energy is still active in the wine cellars excavated out of the rocks. Wood also plays a somewhat similar role, in its contact with grapes and wine in the form of stakes, crates, wine presses and barrels. The knowledge, or more accurately, the wisdom of the viticulturists, carpenters and coopers has been acquired and refined as part of a very ancient tradition. We find among the vine stocks, in small wineries and among local grape growers, types that are infused with their activity. One may still confirm the existence of similar traits among hunters, fishermen and cavalrymen, that is, among those who are passionately devoted to their professions.

The wine grape grower not only serves his god by the sweat of his brow, but also communes with and incorporates his god. Marcel Jouhandeau told me about his father-in-law who, after a day's work as a mail carrier, worked on his own small plot of wine

grapes: “Working in the vineyard was his way of praying”. And I was told of another very old wine grape grower who lived exclusively on bread and wine during the last years of his life: sacramentally.

Tea and wine exhale the perfumes of ancient cultures; we do not want to give the word, perfume, the refined meaning that it has come to possess. Everything alive is, in the final analysis, indivisible and distinctive due to its effects, both by virtue of its roots and branches as well as by its flowers and fruits. Thus, in the realm of the vine, despite and beneath all its differences, equality prevails, an equality that extends from the wine grape grower of Tübingen to the greatest minds of the Tübingen Seminary, from the dwarf Perkeo<sup>37</sup> at the banquet hall of the palace at Heidelberg to the brilliant banquet hall of the Palatine Count. This egalitarian power is sibling to that of the poet, who transfigures human beings by way of the word and turns a pauper into a prince. Baudelaire, who celebrated wine as the friend of the loner and of lovers, but also of the wino and the murderer, understood it in all of its profundity. One night the wine begins to sing in the bottles, captive in its glass prison under its scarlet wax seal: “Un chant plein de lumière et de fraternité”.<sup>38</sup>

The true magical power of the vine is manifested in recurrence, in the seasonal festivals of the wine producing countries. Festivals are held when the grapes have been harvested and when the sun bids farewell; and the celebrations are even more unbridled when the sun returns and brings an end to winter. A powerful rhythm of respiration and inspiration. Then wine is no longer available by the bottle or by the jug; it flows from the barrels, it spews from fountains, it infuses the air.

The madman takes his turn to rule the world; it is an echo, a reflection of remote epochs, when the gods came down to earth and sat at our tables. Great Pan approaches; fauns and satyrs are lying on the ground just on the other side of the wall. A terrestrial creature, with the form of a gnome, begins to frolic with great inspiration. Something that disappeared a long time ago has returned; behind the shouts and capers, behind the disguises and masks, one begins to recognize something, as fleeting as a shadow. This vortex causes one to suspect, behind the frantic activity, the presence of a third element: behind the winter one can make out more than just the spring; behind breathing something more than life; behind the mask something more than a hidden face.

*In vino veritas*; this does not mean that the truth is concealed within wine. Instead, according to this maxim, wine allows us to see something that is always present, although

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<sup>37</sup> Court jester at the court of Karl Philipp von der Pfalz in Heidelberg, ca. 1720, mentioned by J.V. von Scheffel in connection with his impressive capacity for drinking wine.

<sup>38</sup> From the first verse of “The Soul of Wine”: “One night, the soul of wine was singing in the flask: / ‘O man, dear disinherited! to you I sing / This song full of light and of brotherhood / From my prison of glass with its scarlet wax seals’.” Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, tr. William Aggeler, Academy Library Guild, Fresno, 1954.

it is outside of the wine itself. Wine is a key: the present becomes something that supervenes.

75

We are aware of the fact that moderation goes hand in hand with the vine, especially in the countries where it has had its home since ancient times: in the wine grape growing countries. In these areas, no particular merit is attributed to a person who is capable of drinking a large quantity of wine, in contrast to the attitude of the dandies with their *Six-bottle-men*, who remain seated at the table exhibiting a stoic calm right up to the last swallow. For the fog-ridden countries, with their melancholia, strong beers are more appropriate, but especially whiskey. Whiskey is surprising because it has a stimulant effect that is apparent for a long time, while its inebriating effect builds up in secret. Stimulant and narcotic forces proceed in parallel, like the parallel lines that suddenly meet in infinity. Ethereally, the ship plows the waves of conversation; suddenly, the *black-out*<sup>39</sup> supervenes.

Table wine, which accompanies meals, is consumed with moderation, and is often mixed with water. It is the local wine, reliable, autochthonic; it does not come from far away. Anyone who does not grow his own grapes has his own favorite vintner whom he trusts. As for the wines of the famous producers, the *grands crus*, the wines made from select grapes, moderation is inherent to the pleasure of drinking them; abuse is forbidden *per se* in libations where the telluric powers and human art have joined forces. Here, where every drop is valuable, a good taster is indispensable to the vintner; that is, someone who can appreciate the gift, and, more importantly, someone who can officiate over the mystery. When he raises his glass, he seems to pierce it with his gaze, and when he tastes the wine, it is as if he is not only listening to a melody, but perceiving the silence behind the song.

Excesses also occur in the wine grape growing countries. These have less to do with the nature of wine than with the lack of naturalness of the human being. Even in certain Sardinian villages I met drunks who “drank away” their fields and herds, the bedraggled *ubriacone*, with sunken eyes, greedy, the object of scorn, compassion and ridicule.

Such drunks are the exceptions. These countries do not have the streets and neighborhoods swarming with drunks that form the backdrop in the novels of Dickens and Dostoyevsky and provided the models for the macabre sketches of Hogarth. There, the police and the Salvation Army have their hatcheries.

### ***Books and Cities***

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<sup>39</sup> In English in the original [American translator’s note].

Those drunken crowds, who stroll and prowls by night through inhospitable back streets, like those described by De Quincey and Jack London in their memoirs, make us uneasy. On every corner we see the signs of cheap taverns; one drinks standing up, and strong drinks have a powerful effect on weak bodies. Mobs of street walkers, mixed with children, drunk women and homeless women, form a confused mass. Amidst these mobs, thieves and bullies are on the prowl, who make their living off of drunks and weaklings: pimps, touts, pickpockets and miscreants of all kinds.

In these places, people do not drink to remember or to experience more intense feelings; they drink to escape, to forget, and being conscious makes everything worse. The demon is present; someone with an incomparable olfactory sense like Dostoyevsky saw it up close and in person. His travel journals are veritable treatises on demonology, the peregrinations of a visionary throughout the world. With the same certainty as Tocqueville, he apprehended political structures, he understood their basis, beyond borders; it is almost as if one studied the muscles of a living creature and the other its *pneuma*. In Paris, Dostoyevsky experienced tranquility within order: a respect for colossal, intimate, spiritual rules rooted in the soul. It might be a gigantic Heidelberg.

To Dostoyevsky, London seemed like a vast negative image of that humanity that, regardless of all its movement, is itself in a state of repose. During his walks around the city, he began to be overwhelmed by an “indefinable anxiety”, where, “On Saturday nights, a half million workers, male and female, together with their children, flood the entire city like a sea, flocking especially in certain sections, and celebrate the Sabbath all night until five in the morning. They stuff themselves and drink like animals. All of them bring their weekly savings, what they have earned by hard labour and amidst curses. Clusters of gas lamps burn in the butcher shops and restaurants, brightly illuminating the streets. It is as if a ball had been organized for these white negroes. The crowd pushes into the open taverns and in the street. They eat and drink. The beer halls are decorated like palaces. Everybody is drunk, but without gaiety, with a sad drunkenness, sullen, gloomy, strangely silent. Only sometimes an exchange of insults or a bloody quarrel breaks the suspicious silence, which fills one with melancholy. Everyone hurries to get dead drunk as quickly as possible, so as to lose consciousness. The wives do not lag behind their husbands but get drunk with them; the children run and crawl among them....”

He then describes his stroll through a blazing inferno of licentiousness. In Léon Bloy we find a similar aversion, which is expressed hyperbolically and is intensified until it becomes the ideal image of a cannon that brings down the *capitale infame* with one shot. Bloy contemplates all of these things from a different perspective: that of the Hispanic type of Catholic, opposed to Protestantism, with which he retains a relation analogous to that maintained by the cat with the dog.

As for Protestantism, without which the new world and its technology would be unimaginable, it was much harder for it to penetrate into the wine drinking countries than into the Nordic countries. The border zones often produce unexpected phenomena. Consider Geneva.



The perspective of Dostoyevsky, who was able to penetrate the “dead calm” of Paris, would not allow him to be disoriented by the turbulent flow of images that shocked him and filled him with anxiety in London. He could very well have entitled the chapter containing these impressions, for example, “The Splendor and Misery of the World of Machines”. He chose a different title, however: “Baal”. It was obvious that he saw something more: a reigning power amidst that swarm of people.

The human being who yearns to escape does not hurl himself into the void; every way out has something different about it. Flight as an end in itself is an ill-fated kind of motion. In this maxim, we must also include suicide, of course with the exception of its Stoic forms, which must not be considered to be a kind of escape. “In certain circumstances, to abandon life constitutes a duty for the wise man.”

From the perspective of drug consumption, in the scenes such as those observed by Dostoyevsky the narcotic effect alternates with the stimulant effect. We forget something, as if a veil were to be cast over an image painted in grey. Behind the grey image, however, as if a new master had been assigned to the work, appears a different world. Light becomes more illuminating, colors brighter. One’s desires are stripped naked. The embers are deeply buried in the ashes. Now the flame bursts forth again, as if it was fanned by a bellows. The heart, the lungs, respond.

The senses become more acute, and so does one’s ability to smell blood. All over the spacious streets and squares, the masses smell meat, as in the Amazon the voracious Piranhas can taste blood in the water. Just as in the Amazon, the water begins to swirl and splash; here the yeast bubbles and ferments. About twenty years before Dostoyevsky, Dickens depicted a similar scene as part of his account of the execution of the newlywed bride, Mrs. Manning, sentenced to death for a carefully planned murder and robbery. He describes his impressions in the following letter to the *Times*:

“Sir — I was a witness of the execution at Horsemonger-lane this morning. I went there with the intention of observing the crowd gathered to behold it, and I had excellent opportunities of doing so, at intervals all through the night, and continuously from daybreak until after the spectacle was over.

“I believe that a sight so inconceivably awful as the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd collected at that execution this morning could be imagined by no man, and could be presented in no heathen land under the sun. The horrors of the gibbet and of the crime which brought the wretched murderers to it, faded in my mind before the atrocious bearing, looks and language, of the assembled spectators. When I came upon the scene at midnight, the shrillness of the cries and howls that were raised from time to time, denoting that they came from a concourse of boys and girls already assembled in

the best places, made my blood run cold. As the night went on, screeching, and laughing, and yelling in strong chorus of parodies on Negro melodies, with substitutions of ‘Mrs. Manning’ for ‘Susannah,’ and the like, were added to these. When the day dawned, thieves, low prostitutes, ruffians and vagabonds of every kind, flocked on to the ground, with every variety of offensive and foul behaviour. Fightings, faintings, whistlings, imitations of Punch, brutal jokes, tumultuous demonstrations of indecent delight when swooning women were dragged out of the crowd by the police with their dresses disordered, gave a new zest to the general entertainment. When the sun rose brightly—as it did—it gilded thousands upon thousands of upturned faces, so inexpressibly odious in their brutal mirth or callousness, that a man had cause to feel ashamed of the shape he wore....”

## 79

This spectacle does not reflect what is best about the human being. It is nonetheless true that it would be unfair to attribute it to ecstatic intoxication. Ecstatic intoxication uncovers what is already present, as if a veil was lifted or as if the door of a deep vault was forced open. It is one key among others.

When Dickens walked to that neighborhood and spent the night there, he only obeyed a supreme curiosity that for the author is not only legitimate, but even imperative. And if, while there, as he said, he felt shame, this is also part of the learning experience, and it is particularly important in an era like the Victorian Era, when the ideal of unblemished innocence prevailed.

This cannibalistic trait is thus innate to the human being and for it to be manifested you do not even need executions. Cruelty is inherent to the human being in an almost anatomical way, like Mariotte’s Spot and, just like the latter, is hardly perceptible. Thus, in every era there is a proscribed element upon whom all hatred is concentrated. It is accused of heresy, to persecute it is praiseworthy; if something unfortunate happens to it, it will provoke general satisfaction. This complacent acceptance of the misfortune of others is also found in honest people, even in people like Pickwick. This sentiment begins already in the gardens of infancy, in the first grades of elementary school.

## 80

Having reached this point I must resist the temptation to sum up my reflections with a literary digression. Its theme would have been the way we focus our attention on the proscribed. The method varies depending on whether the proscribed element is foreign or domestic, regardless of whether it is benevolent or even indulgent. In that respect, the illumination of evil in Dostoyevsky is essentially different from the way Dickens, Victor Hugo, or, to cite an extreme case, Eugène Sue, addressed the topic.

Dostoyevsky penetrates the internal universe of Raskolnikov; he thinks, he feels, he suffers with the murderer, he is resurrected with him. He follows the great maxim: “This was you”. This is a pedagogical method in the highest sense, insofar as it includes the

reader in this identification, which, for entire chapters, transforms the act of reading into an ordeal; this is the case with Marmeladov's confession and Raskolnikov's declaration.

Dostoyevsky's book, which is often categorized as a detective novel, is in fact quite the contrary. The detective novel fascinates us because a human being is being pursued; the relentless pursuit, the clever traps laid, the manhunt in the jungle of the big city, all form part of the Great Hunt. Dostoyevsky leads us to a lower level; at these depths, the murderer is presented as his own persecutor; but at the same time as someone who triumphs over his own ego. This has a much greater effect on us.

I must also resist my temptation to examine Joseph Conrad as a phenomenon of transition, not only with regard to relations between East and West, but also with respect to the world of morality and, for that reason, he is incomparable in his illumination of the doomed existence. We must point out that here the good conscience begins to get murky. The doomed existence is ambiguous: it no longer belongs to society, but still respects its laws.

## 81

Despite these last few reflections, we have not strayed too far from our theme, or rather, we have only taken a short detour. The mere observation of the human being, whether it is accompanied by comprehension or even by compassion, brings us closer to the object of our study only incompletely.

When the author begins to plunge into the study of, or to identify with, the human being, something different results. Lavater once said that to really understand another person one would have to imitate his face; and it is true that such imitation would not be limited to wearing a mask. This is the touchstone that allows us to distinguish between the real and the imitation; a claim that also applies to actors. Blood is always demanded; and the most faithful imitation, the most subtle study of character, does not attain the power of passion. Art is becoming identical to nature; the mask merges with the original material. In every art, even in the medical art, one will find the difference that involves, in a word, something that is taught in no technical college or school.

Raphael said: "To understand means to become equal". In this context, one must include the animal; the ancient hunters always knew this. This applies not just to the bloody forms of the hunt, but also to the more sublime forms, with their spiritual and imperishable acquisitions. In this regard, as well, the religions of the Far East are distinguished from those of the Near East. Many epochs, even the most remote ones, have felt themselves closer to the animals than our epoch does, they possessed a more profound knowledge of animals, despite all the sophisticated advances of zoology. And never before our time have such notorious forms of animal exploitation ever existed.

The poet, too, knows the secret of the Great Hunt. The primordial hunter conjures the animal by way of dances and masks; similarly, the poet invokes the animal by way of the word, which cannot be reduced to impressions of movement and splashes of colors.

Among brothers one must not abuse praise; nonetheless, I do not want to conceal the fact that Friedrich Georg has won many trophies in this subtle hunt. Thus, with the turkey, the owl, the snake, the hare, and other animals.

We thus hearken back to the dawn of time, to pre-mythical times, to the power of metamorphosis of the Great Mother. Her vestments come in all shapes and sizes, in various forms, yet only one material. In the folk tale, unity becomes visible; the poet evokes it for us, just as the artist generally does. What we have allowed ourselves to forget is more relevant than what we allow ourselves to hear and to see. If this *alone* is achieved, then all the rest is just extra: the fragmentary, the questionable, the object, and time with its nuances.

## 82

It is obvious that for Dostoyevsky there was something anesthetizing behind his relation of the customs of Paris, and something disturbing behind the disorder in London. This speaks in favor of a humane, but also a penetrating vision. He saw the reign of Baal behind the horrendous and fascinating spectacle of the Thames, which has been described by many other witnesses, before and after Dostoyevsky.

Dostoyevsky was undoubtedly thinking of that Bal or Bel who also appeared in the form of a dragon, and whom the king Cyrus demanded that Daniel should worship: “Do you not think that Bel is a living God? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks every day?”<sup>40</sup> Blake saw a green dragon in the London Treasury Building.

Baal has preserved the reputation of being a harsh and pitiless master. The name of Babylon, his principal homeland, has become synonymous with the metropolis in general, and especially with its nocturnal side. Dostoyevsky also perceived something in particular: that puritanical character, where a monstrous display of energy is united with an imperturbable moral conscience. It is therefore not by chance that machine technology and its forms of exploitation were developed there, until they became the precedent and model for critical reflection.

The nocturnal side, present in every metropolis and, as close scrutiny will reveal, in every provincial city, is particularly bleak in this case. Like the marketing of every other commodity, in the big cities vice is marketed more blatantly and in a more specialized way. The streets and neighborhoods devoted to this purpose are basically similar, but differ depending on time and place. They are not the same in the capitals as they are in the port cities or cities hosting major military bases; the place where Hogarth drew his sketches is different from the place where Toulouse-Lautrec drew his sketches. There are cities that have from ancient times evoked the fame of a Capua, while others were founded more recently with the intention of creating concentrations of drunkenness, gambling and sex.

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<sup>40</sup> *The Holy Bible*, Daniel 14:1-22.

Dostoyevsky undoubtedly visited Montmartre during his stay in Paris, but it was not there that Baal, seated on his throne, appeared to him. In the vicinity of Paris he saw structures of order, in London obscene disorder. One might have thought that it would have been the opposite; but it is precisely with regard to this point that the integrity of the artist is displayed, whose glance penetrates the social surface, as if through the varnish on a work of art, until it touches the bottom of things.

## 83

Once again we ask ourselves: why does ecstatic intoxication induce images that are so much more dreary and sad in the Nordic countries than in the southern countries? It is true that the Nordic countries do not produce wine, but this is understandable. The same can be said of the sun and of the climate in general. Poe came from a southern state and at the same time constitutes the classic example for all the horrors of the Anglo-Saxon *black-out*. The hells of Poe and Baudelaire are different; above all because in Poe the machine appears on the scene, not as an economic power, but as a demonic power. The enemy of the artist, even of the human being, is mechanical motion; this was already divined by Hieronymus Bosch.

In the North, the distance that must be traversed to attain to the gift of ecstatic intoxication is enormous; it lacks a large part of the innate, natural cheerfulness. On the other hand, the talent of reflecting it in the mirror of scepticism grows; geniuses of irony, of satire and of the grotesque prosper with greater power in the North than anywhere else.

With distance, fatigue also intensifies. To forget something, to escape from something and, on the other hand, to want to attain or win something; the problem of ecstatic intoxication in general revolves around these two extremes. The more impoverished the substance, the deeper the abyss that must be bridged. In the Victorian family, the father went directly to the brothel after dinner. Work and doctrine become “edifying”, when the foundation is no longer so solid. The obligation based on “being” is reduced to a reflection in appearance.

The image of the desert is constantly imposed on us. Nietzsche meditated on this question for a long time; he wandered through oases and mirages. His perspective on crime must be viewed with these considerations in mind, along with his historical assessment of the Renaissance. Even so, we must be cautious; in this sense, Jacob Burckhardt already suffered from certain optical illusions, and a certain confusion between power and weakness, and it is hard to determine just how disastrous they were. This brings us to Gobineau: “The nostalgia for racial purity is a distinctive trait of the half-breed”. This is one of the maxims with which I have inflicted the most suffering on myself.

Nietzsche’s relation to ecstatic intoxication is that of the hypersensitive; for people with this kind of constitution, the sun, the air, and atmospheric pressure unleash euphoric effects. This is displayed above all in *The Dawn*, in which Nietzsche transmits this idea to the reader. In the preface he speaks of the human being who “desires a long period of

darkness, an unintelligible, hidden, enigmatic something, knowing as he does that he will in time have his own morning, his own redemption, his own rosy dawn.”

Once again we are on the path of approach.

## 84

When the distance has become so great, and the supervention of that which is so necessary to us becomes an unusual event, then the intermediate worlds and the lower worlds gain in their force of attraction. Undoubtedly, not everything is barren: the ruined altars are populated by demons.

We must understand the root of desolation, not its symptoms, since the visible world possesses it in such great variety. For change depends on spatial and temporal circumstances; it is of a kinetic nature. We fly to the poles and to the moon, and take the desert with us. The more we travel, the greater is the flow of images that rushes upon us. Why is it not possible to satiate our hunger for images? It is a sign of the fact that, in the end, images do not satisfy. The real dissatisfaction aspires to overcome space and time.

Images only satisfy when we cease to feel that hunger; there is nothing else in them, there is nothing else beyond them, under them or behind them. They will never yield their secret. Now we can enjoy the contentment of the “last man”, as he has been depicted by Nietzsche and Huxley.

## 85

Where life becomes very helpless, ecstatic intoxication is one of the last resorts that remain. This is one of the reasons that explain why pastors can do nothing against alcoholism. The alcoholic can be helped in neither an economic nor a moral sense; it is an ontological problem, and theology has proven to be increasingly less adequate for its solution.

The drinker does not drink only because he wants to escape from his poverty. He yearns above all to approach spheres that not only lie beyond his own misery, but also beyond helplessness itself; where there is no more suffering. His euphoria conceals something more than just pure well-being and an absence of pain. Dostoyevsky also grasped it with his brilliant depictions; how else could he have put the following sentence into the mouth of his sad hero, Marmeladov, “I drink so that I may suffer twice as much”?

## 86

Cycles, with the alternation between high tide and low tide, are opposed to technological monotony. Here the heartbeat, there the rhythm of the motor; here the poem, there the machine. The impulse towards festive squandering acts both in its vulgar as well as in its sublime forms; both in the person who throws away his wages on drink, as well as in the person who can say: “Once, I lived like the gods.”

Cycles are experienced with greater intensity wherever the meaning of the festival is preserved, and therefore its joy is more intense in wild and backward regions than in urbanized zones, stronger in the countryside than in the city. In the city, the annual fair is constantly taking place, there is light all day and all night. This is why the periodic celebration is reserved for great occasions, and it is precisely in this respect that the mystery of the cycle lies dormant. The cycle comes around full circle when the stillness appears and therefore announces, in that which moves, the invisible within the visible.

In the city one therefore encounters more addicts than in the countryside. It is typical of addiction to try to reduce the periodicity of the cycle of its pleasures to a minimum, or even better, to make it a continuum. In this way, the oscillations become almost imperceptible.

The addict can also hide more easily in the city than in the countryside. He lives more anonymously, he finds hiding places, he can move from one neighborhood to another; and it is easier for him to get his drug.

The drunkard in the village, the morphine addict in the small town, are soon recognized by everyone, even if they try to keep their condition a secret. They can only succeed in doing so when the passage from a steady habit to an absolute dependence is not obvious to all. This coincides with the passage from open and accepted consumption to another, secret and suspect, kind of consumption.

Soon, there is no longer be anything left to hide. Then it is inevitable that there will be a loss of respect and reputation, not to mention economic, social and physical harm. The perversion of all manifestations of friendship, observed and suffered by the persons closest to the addict, and perceived by the latter as well in its demonic inevitability, is one of the saddest spectacles, whose best description is found, perhaps, in several of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories.

### ***The Great Babylon***

87

For the immense consumption of the capital cities, which receive migrants from the provinces and immigrants from other countries, *a single* neighborhood for pleasure is no longer enough. There are various such neighborhoods from which one may choose. Many, like Montmartre, Sao Paulo or the *Mangue* of Río de Janeiro, have become the classic destinations of travelers; others enjoy a fleeting prosperity, perhaps coinciding with annual world's fairs or major festivals. The Council of Constance attracted thousands of women of the night to the city, along with their camp followers.

Even if places could be reduced to a common denominator, the scenery varies. It adjusts to the customers, how much money they have, their culture, and their tastes. At Montmartre one breathes a completely different atmosphere than at Montparnasse.

Behind the Bastille, the criminal influences that are everywhere associated with lasciviousness and intoxication become more evident. Then again, the Rue de Lappe must have changed a lot over the last twenty years; I have not been there in a long time. Verlaine already felt at home in those narrow streets, and not without reason.

“The Avenue de Wagram festers in the 17<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, which is otherwise so distinguished, like an infected vein.” We owe this comparison to Marcel Jouhandeau, who embellishes our steps with kaleidoscopic images. Such infections are possible everywhere, usually to the dismay of their neighbors. Not far from the Neuilly bridge a Luna Park was opened; from there, drunkards and lovers dispersed to less well-lit areas in the vicinity. There was also an element of political insecurity. Concerning this aspect, too, Marcel knew some interesting stories; back then he lived in a house on the Rue du Commandant Marchand, with windows overlooking the Bois de Boulogne.

## 88

The proximity of parks and wooded areas favors such clandestine activities; ecstatic intoxication is concentrated in suspect places. In this respect, Observatory Street in Leipzig deserves more than passing mention. The upper stretch of the road was very respectable; it included the zoological institute, where Meisenheimer was then conducting his research in genetics. I used to live in that area; I used to walk, dressed in a white lab coat, to the laboratory.

The landlady, old and sickly, was hardly capable of taking care of the apartment house, a task that was further complicated by a small domestic zoo. She was taking care of a parrot and an unusual number of cats, whose odor could already be detected in the foyer. When someone in the neighborhood wanted to get rid of a kitten, he would secretly put it outside near her door facing on the courtyard of the building and this caused the old lady such torments of conscience that she finally quelled them by adopting the little foundling.

This and various other reasons explained why there was such a high turnover among the residents of the building. The mere fact of choosing such a place to live was an indication that the tenants either had very low expectations or else were up to no good. The old lady, who had been squeezed dry by the inflation, was forced to put up with such types. Sometimes the older tenants suffered from this situation so much that their sinister blank looks gave them a ghastly appearance. In the end, what you would expect from such a situation finally happened. Shortly before or after my arrival, I don't remember exactly when it was, a lawyer had rented a room; he was about thirty years old, vigorous, bald, and sporting a big black beard like Sudermann's. One of his idiosyncrasies consisted in the fact that at night, when he could not sleep, hookers would be going up and down the stairs and along the hallway to his room all night long. As is usual in such apartment buildings, this hallway was cluttered with all kinds of furniture, where the cats were lying about. One night, when the old lady, who could not get to sleep, opened the door of his room, she fainted from fright at seeing the bearded fellow, who often meditated in the nude.



The building had once been a hotel; one part of the courtyard thus led to the garages and stables where the carriages and horses were kept for the guests who were going to the fair. These garages and stables had been subdivided into very small rooms. The boarding house, which had also seen better days, was still in the front part of the building; it was closely watched by the police. Once, a family wanted to move in to one of the rat-holes in the former stables; not having been paid, the moving crew left, abandoning all the family's belongings on the street in a downpour. This happened at night; the children were crying, the father returned after wandering about in vain; he was drunk and took out his absurd rage on the furniture.

I do not know how this story ended, but I do know that with regard to this question my memory is afflicted by a permanent lacuna, one of the many irreparable moments on the road of life where we failed. It is true that during those "golden" twenties no one had a penny to spare, at least among my circle of acquaintances; but in this case what was involved was more than just a matter of political economy. The image returns: safe and secure in our room, we hear cries for help coming from the street, but we are too comfortable or too cowardly to go downstairs.

As for those pennies, they were in fact scarce, and literally so, despite the fact that only a short time before I still possessed thousands in my wallet. Once, a lawyer who lived in the neighborhood told me that he was short a penny. It was his custom, when night had fallen, to drink his "small beer" in a tavern and, after stashing his extracts and notes from his reading of Hegel in a drawer in his room, he would walk to the tavern in his slippers. The small glass of beer cost twenty pennies; when he reached into his pocket to pay, he was a penny short.

"And what happened then?"

"A laborer was sitting next to me; I asked him for a penny."

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing. First he looked at me, and then he took the penny out his pocket."

## 89

My room was located above the main door of the building. During the day, the street was quiet, but it got busier around the time the cafes closed. Sometimes, I was awakened by voices from the street below; then, I got out of bed and stood to listen by the window in my darkened room, as if from a balcony seat in the theater. The actors were always different; the types, however, were always the same: two women of the night who were exchanging anecdotes; the prostitute and her john; two drunks who were either arguing with each other or expressing their love for one another.

The dialogues between the hetaerae, like those described by Lucian and Aretino, are literary ornaments of a prosaic business, whose intrigues are reproduced more faithfully

by the actual conversations, although not in such a humorous form. Some time later, I was reminded of this episode, when I was in Iceland and I observed how the fisherwomen scaled and gutted the herrings with a steady hand. I observed the same cold objectivity back then in Leipzig, and not without a certain power of suggestion, either. In the gaslight, the average john had a nervous look; one might say that he wanted to penetrate the girls' make-up the way one punches through the plaster in a house.

The regular hookers who cast their nets there were discreet, but were sure to profit if their victim was more or less drunk, naturally without going too far. The girls who frequented the taverns had their own rooms in the neighborhood; a more dangerous kind, who would not show themselves in the light of day, came from the grasslands and stalked the drunks. They were not always successful; one of them was murdered in the park. Kokkel, the coroner, whose masterful lectures I occasionally attended, performed the autopsy. Among other things, he described the wax she applied to her face to enhance her cheekbones, before she went out onto the streets at night.

The conversations of the drunks were interminable; the pals could never separate; thoughts painfully made their way through their brains, until one of the upstairs tenants would finally tell them to shut up. It was strange, however, to hear what came to light in the impressions exchanged between young artisans, fathers of families and pimps. When their thoughts became confused and boring, one nonetheless perceived the desire that inspired them. Gibberish babbled under the moon only betrays the deficiencies we all have in common. The effort seems ridiculous; the weight is too much. Here we can see where all work ends. Shakespeare must have often paid attention to such conversations, and with great profit. And the compassion that made Büchner's Woyzeck a figure of tragedy finds its basis here.

## 90

Before and after the above observations, I also had opportunities to observe the traffic around the Alexanderplatz in Berlin. The walks I took around 1930, sometimes accompanied by Edmond, but almost always alone, were different from the ones I took with Zerbino after the First World War.

I have recalled that name because that comrade reminds me of the characters in Goldoni's comedies. The face of an animal, sharp-featured, a brutal intelligence, with a crude sense of humor. Unemployed, or, more accurately, jobless, but not without means, whose source was suspicious. The son of a local clergyman, with criminal inclinations. He spent the nights in a villa in Dahlem, involuntarily supported by an elderly couple who were almost always out of town on trips, in whose house he also slept during the afternoons. One night the old couple unexpectedly came home and wanted to get a little rest. Zerbino was able, just in the nick of time, to drag himself under the bed and had to stay there for two hours, remaining totally silent. Macabre thoughts passed through his head.

Of a melancholic disposition, he meditated with pleasure about suicide. He pictured it to himself in even its most minute details. No one would find his body; in this scruple as

well as others he recalled the Divine Marqués. He had discovered in the heart of the forest a fox's den, with such extraordinarily large passageways that he would only need to expand them a little to be able to slide into the lair: that is where everything was supposed to happen.

Like that idea, all of his plans displayed features that were both fantastic as well as realistic; a combination that made great achievements possible. The times were propitious for such spirits; we have known examples. The last time I heard any news about Zerbino, it was during the Second World War, when he showed up on the Army General Staff.

"So, what is Zerbino doing?", I asked Martin, who was the Chief of Personnel on the General Staff.

"He organizes trips to the front for theater groups, and during his vacations he buys abandoned gravel quarries on the outskirts of Berlin."

"Why?"

"He thinks that after the war they will become gold mines, because people will not know where else to dump the ruins."

Thus, a kind of trafficking in the souls of the dead. This happened twenty years later, shortly before the catastrophe swallowed him. Without leaving a trace, as he had desired, and also in a hole, even if it was not dug out by a fox.

In other times he used to show up at my house, more often than I liked, to pick me up for a night on the town. It was my reading time, and besides, I could not sleep whenever I pleased, like Zerbino, but, every morning, I had to be there at the sound of the bell at the Bendlerstrasse or the Friedrichstrasse to work on the drafting of the military regulations. With regard to formal considerations, this job was pleasant, but it demanded a lot of concentration. There were four of us, Hüttmann, Kienitz, Westernhagen and me; that it was a position that offered a bright future may be discerned from the fact that two of them became lieutenant generals, and Kienitz even became a general. During the offensive in France, I saw him once as he was racing past us; the columns had to move to the side of the road, military police on motorcycles cleared the way for him, their sirens wailing. I heard from Westernhagen that, during the defense of Berlin, Zerbino tried to swim across the Spree, and that the Russian snipers shot him.

## 91

When Zerbino came, first of all he had to get me in the mood for adventure. He infallibly succeeded in doing so, for he possessed a gift of persuasion worthy of a lawyer. One day when I told him I was coming down with a cold, he went to a pharmacy and returned with pills that he made me swallow. Then we went in a taxi to Gedächtniskirche and then walked, stopping now and then, down the Kurfürstendamm towards Halensee.

Zerbino preferred to walk along the Alexanderplatz. He wanted to “flirt with the sluts”. But he did not always get his way. As a general rule, people like him, who only interfere with business, are not very well received by professionals. Zerbino was an exception. He was by no means one of those handsome men like Kramberg; he possessed a rough kind of masculinity, instead. The Sheikh who gave everyone their nicknames called him the “Negro”. Sometimes he also called him the “Beast”, because of the strong odor that he emitted.

That had its own appeal; and there was also his predilection for crime. He had a big nose, thick lips, a protruding jaw and glittering eyes: it was an enigma how all of these features could be manifested in the offspring of a clergyman. A face like that might have launched him on a career, like certain movie actors or, even better, like some of the personalities whom they depict. Once I heard him say to one of those starry-eyed women whom he had charmed with his rough looks and engaged in conversation: “We only need a bed”; the hallmark of a real professional in the trade, condensed in the most concise expression.

## 92

From an economic point of view, these excursions coincided with the high point of the inflation crisis; from the point of view of style, they coincided with the era when expressionism captured the image of the city. The miserable look of the streets, the crowded houses with their chipped and peeling paint, the masses of people roving about, some of them with old, patched uniforms: all of this poverty was exhibited under the garish light of the new brutalizing technologies. Fluorescent lights had made their appearance: neon lights in white, blue and red that cast a corpse-like pallor on the faces in the crowds. Kirchner had already observed this in 1912; here, too, the vision of the artist had anticipated the genius of the technician. Before the war, the trial of a pimp by the name of Berger, who was accused of murder, had opened up a window on the nocturnal side of the habitat of the urban concentrations: wandering from one bar to another, along with conversations on the streets, until the street lamps were lit, the restless night, the settling of accounts in the lobby of the Silesia station, sleep until midday, a grey awakening, as if a demon was inciting him to another round.

Tresckow, the chief of police, was intimately familiar with this world and its stories. Poverty persisted, and it had even become generalized, but, at the same time, it had become politicized. The caricatures of George Grosz and Otto Dix replaced those of Zille, who still preserved a storehouse of good sentiments. It is distasteful to recall those convulsions that heralded great changes. For many of these artists this was certainly the case; later, Rudolf Schlichter wrote to me that Grosz would have preferred to see that part of his work destroyed.

The tensions only became worse; ten years later they reached a new high point, when National Socialists and Communists faced off on the Alexanderplatz. The forces were equal, and it seemed to be almost a miracle that the police were able to come between them and prevent a pitched battle on the street. There were also riots a few days later, when the big Jewish department stores were shut down.

I had to burn, along with other documents, my notes from those days, and it is a loss that I still regret. These notes covered the period from the massive demonstration at the Tempelhof field, with its huge fireworks display, to the proscription of June 1934. I do not lament the loss of the events themselves, but of the original version of my impressions of them. All that remains of the events is the shell but not the protoplasmic movement of the grey organism that, although far from any beauty and from all logic, had formed that shell.

When our bus was crossing the Janowitz bridge, a fellow was sitting in front of me who might have been a boilermaker or a farmer; he said, "The Jew does not want to work with the hammer"; at the same time he was shaking his fist, as if he was ready to give someone a good thrashing. The bus, a bucket full of men, passed over the Spree. It was as if a stone had fallen into the water and made waves; everyone heard it, but no one said anything. It was a new kind of silence that supervened and spread there: it was no longer a courteous, approving, indignant or indifferent silence; perhaps it combined a little of all those aspects, but it was essentially something different.

At such moments we perceive something new that we find shocking and strange, but which at the same time we recognize with absolute clarity, as if we always knew it. This was the way I felt in 1914 when I heard the hiss of the first artillery shells at Orainville. Life was played in a new key.

Or at Sylt, in 1934: there we were on the sandy beach, vacationers from Berlin and Hamburg, from Central and Southern Germany. The sun blazed on the wicker chairs. An image that seems even more evocative of the marvelous summer of 1914; perhaps a little more vulgar, with slightly more revealing bathing suits. Someone arrived with the morning newspapers. Röhm and the *crème* of the SA had been arrested during the night, and some of them had already been executed. A Danish newspaper reported that there were hundreds of victims. Only a few hours before, they were on the verge of taking over the Reichswehr, and now they were behind bars, forced to take cyanide capsules, or lying dead on the ground.

How much time passed on that beach until, among the wicker chairs, "an opinion took shape"? Two minutes, maybe three. Then, a chorus of voices all spoke at once, clear, resounding and full of conviction, like the crowing of the roosters in a chicken coop. They were bad comrades, and they got what they deserved. One fellow had known the chief of the Berlin group of the SA and until only the day before it was likely that he had bragged about it. Now he could expose him, flay him alive: as an ephebe of the *haut pederasty*, as a bellhop whose brilliant career is explained by the fact that he allowed himself to be groped in the elevator.

Stories like this are repeated in every revolution, as their first froth. They seem unbelievable, but they conform to the rule: they are predictable. Anyone who thought at

the time that it was the beginning of the end was mistaken; he did not know the power of spilled blood.

The historian must recognize cyclic figures; only thus will history be respected as a science. Then the anatomy will be exact, the proportions will be grasped. For the historian is more of a draftsman than a painter, he is fascinated by the categories into which the plan is divided, the broad strokes. As for the events, he lags behind the intelligent journalist. The latter saw how the eyes began to glitter, how the fur bristled and the claws almost imperceptibly extended. Suetonius is irreplaceable, despite Tacitus. Nor can we do without Martial. When we go from one to the other in our reading, it is as if we were changing the lens in a microscope. The optical field is narrowed; the details of the structure become more precise.

## 94

I returned to the Alexanderplatz, this time in the early 1930s, when it still retained many peculiar turn-of-the-century features. There were more movie theaters and more automobiles, but there was not so much mechanical music. Hats and ties were still indispensable accessories. The working class derby had disappeared. The old and well-worn roads had come a long way since the times when the parade grounds of Frederick the Great were first cleared. All of this was more or less erased from the map by the bombings: the Police Headquarters, the department stores, the beer halls, the big apartment blocks from the years of economic prosperity, with their facades and courtyards, where every Sunday an organ grinder came.

When I took a look at the map of the city in the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of Baedeker's 1954 Guide, in order to retrace the paths of my walking itineraries, I felt like I was lost. I looked for the street names, but they had changed, too; Landsberger Avenue is now Lenin Avenue. I could not find the post office, although I had gone there every day on business. Where was the mailbox? And where was the barbershop?

The houses I lived in, here or in Hannover or in Leipzig, have almost all disappeared; from the basements, where the coal and the bicycles were stored, to the attics, where the old furniture was kept. In their places, there are now other buildings or public parks or parking lots.

In such reencounters, the time that has passed seems to fade away; the reality of the houses begins to become doubtful; it is as if the architect's sketch did not satisfy him and he immediately erased it after drafting it. There is something even more strange, however: in dreams, everything stays the same as always: completely unscathed, almost invulnerable. However much our memories may leave us in the lurch, the *record* will always remain faithful to us. I walk through the passage into the courtyard and walk up the worn stairs. Here is the window and there are the water lilies. The landlady is standing in the hallway; she heard my footsteps. She asks me where I have been all this time.

It was our apartment on Stralauer Strasse; it had only one floor and it had a clear view of the broad surfaces of the eastern port. We made a mistake by moving to Steglitz; in the eastern part of Berlin I felt better. The city had always been a prison to me; I often asked myself what I had lost there. All places are substitutes, but in the forest one suspects which one is the authentic place.

Waking up was hardly peaceful; after breakfast, I walked a couple of blocks to get some air. The streets were named after Prussian ministers of state: Beymes, Gosslers and others. One of them, a former Minister of Finance, often read the *Gazette of the Cross* on his way to the Ministry every morning; he began at the end, with the obituaries. If a general or some other high dignitary had died, he celebrated this as a good omen: the king would be spared the expense of another pension. This anecdote, along with many others, I owe to Martin, whom I visited in Zolchow now and then; such anecdotes constituted a kind of appendix to my reading of *The Histories of the Court of Vehse*, which I found extremely interesting.

It costs me as much effort to recall the streets as it does to remember my daily schedule. Instead, I can easily recall what I did during periods much more remote in time, but also in periods subsequent to my stay in Leipzig; a day in the forests and swamps of Rehburg, in the trenches of Monchy, in the vineyard at Überlinger. I mention this as one more example of the power of recall; it is recall that guides the memory and determines it. With people, something similar happens to me, as in the *recherche du temps perdu*: my Parisian encounters stand out more distinctly than those of my Berlin period. In both places I got to know the most disparate spirits, including past, present and future celebrities. But what is glory in an era in which history itself loses its contours? "Even Maggi is famous"; the words of Wedekind are not so far off the mark; they are instead the seals that are impressed and engraved in memory; when they wear off, it's no big deal.

I slept late; the light was reflecting off the river. When you spend the day in the classical mode of the man of letters, you experience a certain kind of restlessness. You smoke a cigarette, you pick a book from the shelf. Then you feel good contemplating a flower, a painting. My beginnings in entomology were modest: small specimens from Brandenburg, and also from the Balearic Isles and Sicily. My passion grew from decade to decade, until it was like that of the old Chinaman whose memory stockpiled dozens of ideograms. In a glance, each of them comes to life, as if you had run your fingers along a multicolor keyboard. This morning, the mere sight of the Chinese *mylabride* has reminded me of the fields of Hong Kong, in the details of its structure. Legions of them flutter over the wild chicory and roses, in nuptial flight.

When, much later, I recalled those walks on the Alexanderplatz, I also thought of those empty hours. They brought me all along the Spree or by the Silesian station, in whose hallways and waiting rooms a strikingly oriental life unfolds. In the Gare de l'Est you find it again, transplanted a few degrees of longitude.

It had been a long time since I last heard any news of Zerbino. I did, however, run into Edmond now and then, by chance or by prior arrangement. Edmond was a lunatic type, the natural man of the night, with delicate skin, susceptible to imponderable radiations and impressions, a hypersensitive in the sense of Reichenbach's classifications.

With respect to perception, especially nocturnal perception, he might have rivaled Kubin, but he lacked creative power. His pleasure was limited to observation and the combinations that were associated with it. At night, he could sit alone, doing nothing, for hours at a time. If something happened, he erased its tracks. Once, he dismantled the doorknob and its lock mechanism, broke it down into its smallest pieces, and then put it back together again. On another occasion he extracted one of his teeth with a nail file. Although he read many books and documents, almost everything in his house was in order, down to the smallest details. It was very important to him that each object should have its assigned place, even a pin, and it made him nervous if he could not dot every i. "Look, there is always something that comes up and throws a wrench in the works: a letter to mail, a book loaned, a key to an unknown lock."

This "something" intrigued him; thus, for example, the dark passages in historical works, especially memoirs, which he read avidly, but also the dark passages in his personal relationships. He esteemed complicated characters, but their motives had to be resolvable as enigmas. He thought that astrology was an important resource.

This "little thing" that remained in a state of disorder even after the house was cleaned, in his strolls through history and characters, displeased him as much as those opaque elements in the past of human beings, especially the past of the women who crossed his path. Even in the case of the youngest ones, there had always been this something or someone, however much you should stubbornly try to convince yourself that you were the first. You just had to look hard enough to bring to light the cousin in the garden or the old uncle playing truth or dare.

He had to know when a dove had flown into his net. He therefore extracted, as he had done with the file and his tooth, what irritated him. Then he said: "Over every one of them an ultimate truth rules; if you reveal it, it's like you hamstring her."

A hypochondriac fastidiousness completes his portrait. He felt disgusting if he did not change his shirt twice a day. He loved to go to the hot baths at night, where he would let his mind wander. Now and then, even in the middle of the day, in order to put himself in order, he would go to the Turkish baths on the Friedrichstrasse, a center of tyrannical and exotic temptations of the flesh.

Edmond was less arrogant than Zerbino, but more dangerous. His nature, somewhere between meditative and lethargic, was interrupted by active phases, as if he was dreaming about jumping while he was asleep. He had been a second lieutenant in a Polish cavalry regiment and then deserted. On a certain occasion, under a torrid sun, they had taken a town by assault and had behaved mercilessly, like devils. I can still remember the images of the contrasting colors of the oriental engravings. Thus, the green of the cucumbers,



which they had gathered by the armful in enormous containers, and devoured with an incredible pleasure, while one of the cavalymen was dragging a screaming woman off to the stables. They ate the cucumbers that, in their dry mouths, melted into pure juice; the red shawl fluttered in the wind.

From a sociological point of view, Edmond was one of those horsemen without a horse who, at that time, filled the streets, and whose participation in the disorders to come was anonymous, but significant. If he got a few scratches, his traces were everywhere. Then, they exchanged the saddle for mechanical vehicles. In Edmond, there was also a Sarmatian element. Riding a horse was not just a seigniorial pleasure, but also a tyrannical act. This was expressed in his *behaviour* [in English in the original], and in the erotic sense as well.

He preferred timid creatures, on the plump side, with pale faces, almost white, with a protruding lower lip. We find such creatures in Arosa and in the Venetian pastels; doves with shining eyes, red mouths, and snow-white breasts. There was little to say of their intelligence, since, undoubtedly, they had the right to listen, but were hardly allowed to open their mouths. Nonetheless, good harmony reigned, and there was an unshakeable understanding when I was spending some time with him and with one of these girls, especially in the Mokka Efti, a small café on the Friedrichstadt. When the dove awoke and dared to make an observation, he contemplated her with a vague feeling of benevolence. “Pay attention to this: don’t you know that I am going to ride you later?”

It did not appear that these words were received with displeasure. Among men it was different; for many, Edmond was suspect from the very first moment. His gaze caused a disagreeable sensation: it stripped one naked, scrutinized, and could even acquire an inquisitorial power. He would often, in conversation, leap over a few links in the causal chain and pronounce, right to his interlocutor’s face, more or less disagreeable truths; but he also had a reputation for being nosy.

Primitive temperaments saw him simply as a snitch; and it occasionally happened that shopkeepers reprimanded him when he was in the market, or when he had stopped before a shop window and was observing the people in the crowd. The women with whom he entered into conversation—unlike Zerbino, he rarely spoke to them—took him for an agent of the vice squad. They flipped his collar, behind which they thought that he had concealed his police badge. They thus committed an injustice, since, zoologically speaking, they identified the genus, but not the species. In fact, his passion consisted in gathering information. His literary, social and erotic existence was full of schemes, investigations and discoveries. This was in itself satisfying to him, as a game, as accumulation without a purpose. He hardly even needed to get up from his chair to obtain pleasure; ultimately, like one of Dostoyevsky’s heroes, he did nothing but walk the streets in restless agitation.

In addition, he was good chess player. I did not like playing with him, for when he announced checkmate he was incapable of containing a pleasure whose nature had nothing to do with the game. For this same reason, he was never loved as a superior. His

instructions were not limited to what was really required, or else they were intermingled with other measures that, although justified, caused the subordinate to feel rebellious. Even those who obeyed him without a word of complaint felt humiliated. I can say this because I followed his development through the most diverse phases; from the *flâneur* and idler, to the understanding and deferent comrade, to the officer with more or less important responsibilities.

It would be foolish, however, to interpret all this as the attitude of the cyclist who pedals downhill and coasts uphill. That is for imbeciles. One is still the same person if, even though the oppressive circumstances vary, one recognizes them and adapts to them. This is what is so surprising about his Sarmatian virtuosity. From this point of view, by the way, his Nietzschean pretension to have descended from the Polish aristocracy acquires a glimmer of credibility.

## 95

These walks were very precious to me because Edmond had a strange system on the basis of which his own problems stood out more distinctly. We walked slowly around the square and made our way through the crowds. Once, on the Granadierstrasse, someone behind us shouted “dandies” at us, despite the fact that we were modestly attired. Just then, a young boy came out of a hostel: he was wearing makeup, his hair was meticulously groomed, he was wearing a jacket with tails and loafers with fancy white leather brocade. “This is the elegance that we can allow ourselves here.”

Back then, Edmond spent the days sleeping and reading, when he was not going here and there to get news about our friends. He was engrossed with particular devotion in the reading of *Secret Histories and Enigmatic Men* by Bülaus, a twelve volume gold mine for complicated spirits of his kind.

I found him in the telephone booth, where he called Edith to find out if she was free. He told her that he had to work in a laboratory late that evening. She did not need to know where he was during the first half of the night. In these midnight walks he associated the pleasurable with the useful. Perhaps they also played the role of an insulating layer for him. Edith had been sniffing around, several times, like a dog that feels disturbed by a strange smell.

The atmosphere of these conversations is more familiar to me than the details of his arguments. They revolved around character types or modes of behavior. At that time he told me that he intended to compile an index of characters from the texts of Dostoyevsky, in accordance with the model of a genealogical tree or—even better—of a molecule of organic chemistry. This would serve as a guide while reading those great novels, whose plots Edmond knew down to their most subtle features. In such cases we find ourselves within a book as if we were within a timeless reality. Once in a while, we would abandon the pavements of Berlin and appear at the Hay Market of Saint Petersburg or at the brothel where Svidrigailov spent his last night. I now recall that once we also conversed about the suicide of a pilot that was reported in the newspapers. He had let his plane

crash, without any consideration for the passengers. I knew that Edmond's view of this would be different from my own.

Thus, the city streets were like a stage set and life passed like background colors, like fluid. This does not mean that it did not have its own life. The decomposition that seizes upon such places is not only a threat to order, but it also liberates certain energies. They are places that hardly offer any resistance to that which supervenes, and not only to diseases.

## 96

I cannot do less than cite Svidrigailov again. Just as he regrets the fact that Shakespeare did not put Falstaff in more of his scenes, so, too, may we regret the fact that Dostoyevsky did not give us a more detailed character sketch of one of his most important characters. Falstaff and Svidrigailov have in common an absolute and effective distance with respect to moral hierarchies, from whose encumbrances they managed to free themselves at the cost of their reputations. The fact that they do not suffer from the loss of their sense of honor, but that they even derive advantages from it, allows us to infer a reserve of autonomous energy.

Thus, in his conversation with Raskolnikov about ghosts, Svidrigailov says: "I agree that ghosts only appear to the sick, but that only proves that they are unable to appear except to the sick, not that they don't exist."

It is true that with the increase of weakness, there is also an increase in receptivity. This applies above all when death approaches. When the sick man begins to see "his deaths", it is said that his death is announced. Illnesses also cause an intensification of the perception of normal colors, especially red. Sickness is not only a loss, but also a premonition.

Something similar takes place in ecstatic intoxication. Terror and joy are symptoms of liberation, intimately related to it. Everyone knows that the mere proximity or company of drunken persons can cause the foundations of reality to tremble. The great festivals attest to this. Thus, the Alexanderplatz encourages conversations, it provides them with a backdrop.

Today it is easier to find the perfect lover than it is to find a partner for conversation who is acquainted with history and literature. The great epoch that was propitious for dialogue was the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which, at least in this aspect, has survived longer in France than here in Germany. Edmond, an unsympathetic character to most people, and sinister to more than one, was for me a fortunate discovery. He possessed a cultivated attentiveness that did not let any allusion pass unnoticed. I often think of those midnight conversations, engaged in with such oneiric indolence, in the heart of the intoxicated city.

Finally we said good night, and Edmond returned to his harem. Once again, he went to the telephone booth to call Edith, and, without waiting for her to pick up the phone—one ring, and the rest was free—he took back his obol.

## ***Scorched Wings***

97

I took two or three walks around the square, where the traffic was still thick. The number of drunks had noticeably increased; they fought with each other on the street corners. In groups of dark-clad men the helmets of the police glittered. In the telephone booth where Edmond had called Edith, a pimp was settling accounts with his girls. So as not to call attention to himself he was kneeling them. Later, he would beat them. Hawkers circulated with obscene pictures, bait to catch his customers.

My impressions of the place were dull, but more immediate and vulgar than in the Kurfürstendamm. There, the public was more elegant; they moved differently, they were more agile; the women were less pushy; they let the customer take the initiative. The topographical conditions are also important. On a big street, with multicolored lights, when you are out for some fun, freedom does not seem to be too diminished. On the other hand, in a city square one easily gets the impression of inevitability. One does not make progress, one only goes in circles around a central point where the demon lies in wait. Ecstatic intoxication shackles more securely; painted moths flutter around the light.

The metropolitan centers are recruiting grounds not just for the barracks, but also for vice; new reinforcements are always arriving from the provinces and they are soon consumed. I once had a conversation with Edmond about the awakening which leaves a presentment of doom, about the fearful confrontation of empirical man with moral man, with his “better self”, when contemplated in the mirror behind the “nocturnal”. Hogarth has illustrated this approach “by degrees” in some of his horror stories. One can also think of mill slaves; of course, this is only one of the possible ideas. In the last stages, shortly before the catastrophe, the results of approach become similar to those which, in the Middle Ages, were attributed to demonic influences. Thus, for example, the proliferation of rats or insects which is one of the symptoms of *delirium tremens*. The cocaine addict imagines that cockroaches and spiders are crawling on or under his skin. They cannot be convinced that they are suffering from a hallucination; to the contrary, to free themselves they scratch themselves with their fingernails or other instruments.

There is nothing more horrible than the visions that accompany this delirium, veritable acts of self-destruction. The unhappy addict hears, in his confused stupor, from outside himself, court proceedings where he is on trial and witnesses are interrogated who make shocking statements. Or the noise of a crowd that has gathered in front of his house because his misdeeds have become a burden to the city.

We should also see this delirium as a sudden qualitative change. A feeling of guilt, experienced with greater or lesser intensity after every swallow, accumulates, and now presses down on the addict with all its weight.

## 98

This pertains to the theme of the encounter with oneself: the annihilation of the human being by way of his reflected image. Oscar Wilde has captured this process, with a surprising degree of accuracy, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

When I attended my first courtroom trial—it took place in Hannover and I was still in high school—a sixty-year-old man was being tried. It was a case of fraud, but before the evidence was examined, there was a brief exchange between judge and defendant.

“First of all, we will recite your prior convictions.”

“No, not the priors, no: it is unnecessary.”

They exchanged words several times, until the judge finally read the list of the defendant’s prior convictions. It was a long list: petty larceny, when he was still an apprentice; embezzlement; fraud; and fraud again and again in many cases that were all similar and had also led to the same result. The man had spent most of his life behind bars. At the beginning of the trial he had the look of one of those businessmen you see in offices or behind the counters at banks. It was obvious that he always knew how to win people’s confidence; otherwise, he would not have been able to return to his life of crime so often.

When the judge began to read the list of prior offenses, the defendant’s face changed. He lost his composure, as if his personality had been extracted, and turned pale. His will to defend himself, which he had expressed right up until that moment, vanished. His head slumped towards his chest. The atmosphere in the courtroom became hostile: “That’s just the kind of person you are.” He had already been found guilty even before he was tried.

Here I was able to experience, for the first time, how the human being comes face to face with his *karma*; this confrontation borders on the judgment of the dead. In the mirror one sees behind the everyday face the face of destiny. “Thus must you be, from self there is no remission.”<sup>41</sup>

The human being can argue with death, but not with his own image. Thus one can understand the fact that the convicted murderer still persists in maintaining his innocence on the scaffold; having reached this point, his desire can no longer save his head. This is one of the facts that testify to an instinct for transcendence.

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<sup>41</sup> From Goethe’s poem, “Primal Words, Orphic” (*Urworte Orphisch*, 1817), *Selected Poems*, tr. John Whaley, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1998, p. 123.

To bring about this confrontation is the most powerful and also the most dangerous pedagogical method. This is not the job of the accuser. Destiny itself can knock at the door. The “new man” can arise from catastrophe, as has been described in the great confessions from Augustine to Hamann and Kanne. Likewise, in Gotthelf’s *Hans Berner and His Sons* [*Hans Berner und seine Söhne*—1843], a brief narrative through which the winds of the Last Judgment blow. “This is what Hans Berner said to his sons, and his words weighed on their heads like a burden of one thousand quintals.”

By evoking that courtroom episode, I am pleased, by the way, to boast that even then, when I was still a boy, I did not share the unanimous feeling of hostility in the gallery towards the accused, but I recognized him as a tragic figure; of course, not consciously, but rather in the form of a nightmare that has tormented me for a long time. Once again that head appears before me—or, as I undoubtedly should have said, the head of that culprit—that slowly sank down towards his chest.

## 99

Viewing places as vast mills is only one possible point of view. Here one cannot reject the principle of selection. There can be no discipline where there is no indiscipline, either. Since we are dealing with a mill, we should think of various degrees of hardness, and gravity also offers us the analogy: the image of the wheat that is separated from the chaff is very ancient.

As for ecstatic intoxication, the question is posed as to whether or not it creates dependence. A good psychologist can undoubtedly tell us the answer in advance. During the night before he committed suicide, Svidrigailov thought he saw traits of a whore in the face of a five-year-old girl. Things like that are plausible, even if you do not believe in Lombroso’s measuring arts. Just as the internal form imprints the external aspect and precedes it in time, so does character form the physiognomy. Likewise, predisposition precedes habit. By this I mean that there are types who from the beginning must keep far away from drugs. The inclination is predictable and, along with it, the inclined planes.

The large number of hospital patients who are currently being introduced to morphine only represents a small part of the contingent of morphine users. The adventurer who is distinguished by his superabundance of force will not join their ranks. Rather, he will take to drink, and even then he will not seek in drink a narcotic and tranquilizing consolation, but an excitatory stimulant. This is also expressed in his taste for crime, which tends towards brutality.

The abuse of alcohol is harmful not only when it is chronic, but it can also take a fatal turn in an acute episode. Often enough, one incident of excess is all it takes to ruin someone. Effects can be unleashed that the victim never would have considered possible, not even in his dreams. In every office, in every business, there is someone who disappears overnight, and when you ask about him, the response is often: “You know: his love affair with the bottle.”

In motor vehicle traffic, there is no place for such roundabout expressions and euphemistic circumlocutions; the traffic accident demystifies them.

## 100

When I look back on the past, it seems to me that we did not lack enlightenment concerning this question. We were taught about it by our high school teachers, and they hardly told us anything new; nothing that we did not already learn on the playgrounds and, undoubtedly, more thoroughly. Besides, many of us had already advanced beyond theory.

The best lessons are proved by their details. An uncle along the lines of Diderot's *bourru bienfaisant* is priceless. "Soap and water prevent ninety percent of venereal diseases", my father told me; he brought up this advice in our conversation.

The teacher described how a drunk left a tavern and was hounded by prostitutes. They stalked him and he contented himself with a piece of meat that, under other circumstances, he would not have even touched. This is already serious; but to top it all off, he forgot to take precautions. Furthermore, it all takes much longer than when you are sober.

"When we drink we think we can do it much better; but it lasts only one-third as long, not to speak of the pleasure."

This latter observation struck our teacher as a hilarious joke. He added information about the various kinds of infections.

Meanwhile, sexually transmitted diseases have lost their aura of horror, despite what we hear from the doctors who say that, due to immigration, there will be more cases. In any event, the remedies appear to have a radical effect. During my service with the military police regiment in Paris, I was surprised to see that, to employ a term used by Rabelais, those "infected by Venus" rejoined their units after three days of treatment. Of course, they could not get away completely unscathed, but had to spend three days in the brig, "for noncompliance with health regulations". In 1870 an occupation that lasted that long would have annihilated an army; anyone who wants to get an idea of why can read Maupassant's *Le lit* 29.

In the American armed forces such unfortunates were supposed to be punished with much harsher penalties, including demotion. This might be a remnant of Puritanism. In general, we must not discount the suspicion that the disappearance of this "plague of humanity" might be connected with the decline of Christian morality. In such cases I do not usually speak of cause and effect, but of correlations. It is not about progress, but about a new global image. Nietzsche already perceived this quite well, but nonetheless was himself at the receiving end of a direct hit.

In addition to the physical sufferings that accompany venereal disease, a stigma is attached to the victim which marks him as a pariah. This increases its terrors, which will soon be unimaginable to us. For the most part, its victims suffer in secret, for obvious reasons. We may assume, however, that the hidden casualties of the war of the 1870s still had an impact right up until the turn of the century. Already, in *Simplicissimus*, France was attributed with the greatest responsibility for this plague. Syphilis and “the French disease” are synonymous. “My dear Seydlitz”, said Frederick to his cavalry general, “you began by suffering the French disease, and now it is the French themselves who are suffering from us.”

Every large family has an uncle who died after a long period spent in a wheelchair or in a mental institution. One called attention to himself due to his strange way of getting about, while the other shocked people by his eccentric behavior.

Mrs. Schwendi, a widow whom I met during my trip to the Amazon, told me the story of the sufferings of her husband, which caused her to suffer as well. She was shocked less by his absurd outbursts than by the fact that he never closed the door when he went to the bathroom. Then he was placed in a sanitarium where he was to receive treatment. One fine day, seated at the kitchen table, after the soup, when he was preparing to carve the turkey, her husband looked at her affectionately:

“For a long time I have felt the desire to cut your throat. Isn’t this a good time?”

“No, Arthur, the knife is not very sharp. Give it to me, and I will bring it to the kitchen to sharpen it.”

She left and came back with the attendants from the mental hospital, who seized him and held him down.

“One day I wanted to go see him. The doctor asked me, ‘Are you sure?’; nonetheless, he allowed me to watch him through the door. In a swimming pool a group of naked men were howling and throwing chunks of moss around, a green hell. The doctor told me, ‘Now your husband is nothing but a beast and that is all. You will have to accept it’.”

In rural areas people often take these sick individuals under their own care; it was then inconceivable that one could be born or die in a hospital. Until the First World War, the main roads, which are now completely dominated by motor vehicles, were then also used by horse-drawn carriages. One stayed overnight in the houses of relatives or in hostels where your father and your grandfather had slept. Martin told me how, traveling on horseback to Berlin, they had visited his uncle Ludolf. While our father, after dinner, smoked a cigar with his uncle, the boy went to take a walk in the courtyard. He opened the door of an adjacent apartment and saw a man wearing a frock coat. This was unusual at that time of day; but what was even more unusual was the fact that this man was not standing up, but was on all fours, like a dog that was guarding the door. He looked up; his black goatee stood out against his dress shirt. Behind him, a servant appeared and closed the door.



When they resumed their trip on horseback, since they wanted to get to the city by nightfall, Martin said, "Father, I saw uncle Friedrich".

Our father abstained from commentary.

## 101

Since the autumn of 1916, that is, since the Battle of the Somme, our unit had a pretty regular routine: service at the front, wounded, military hospital, leave, garrison duty, return to the front. This was repeated until the moment when a well-aimed shot crippled or killed one of us.

While on garrison duty we would always return to find the same "old warhorses"; some were old, others crippled, such as, for example, the "Sheikh", who suffered from deforming arthritis. He held his cigarettes between the thumb and the index finger of a strangely splayed hand. The disease progressed slowly; it lasted fifteen years, until he died in Silesia, where he was a Justice of the Peace.

The "Sheikh" had been recalled to active service; already as a young officer he had bad luck. He had given himself the nickname; he borrowed it from one of his favorite books, the histories of the Sheikh Nefzaoui. His knowledge of erotic literature was vast. He shared with us not only the fruits of his reading, but also his practical experiences, while we were waiting in the lobby or leaning against the wall in the kitchen waiting for Wulkow, who was always late.

The Sheikh combined an unlimited knowledge of the most disparate topics with a systematic and classifying type of mind. With regard to venereal infections, he viewed them less as a doctor and as a moralist than as a lover of curiosities. He had divided them into three degrees: in the first, the warning of Venus, in the second, the blow, and in the third, medical torture.

He had plenty of examples. With the increase in traffic that came with the war, afflictions of every kind multiplied. Those who had been on the receiving end of the blows of Venus did not keep it secret. They drank water in wine bottles. "Orderly, when I order a bottle of white Moselle wine, you know what mean." It is true that they did not consult with the chief medical officer, because they did not want their disease to be registered in their service record; they preferred Krakauer, who lived in the vicinity of the train station, as the greatest of dermatologists. Some were not capable of giving up drinking; if Krakauer warned them to stop drinking, they became angry. "You know that if you do not begin to live like a newborn babe, within three days things will go badly for you."

It was different when "Venus struck" with a vengeance; then the victims told nobody. They preferred to keep it to themselves. Kieber was the sole exception. When, leaning against the wall, waiting for Wulkow, he began to grumble: "But when will the old man

come with his big bowl full of thick soup! What a hangover! and I am dying of hunger besides, and to top it all off, my syphilis!”

Finally, Wulkow arrived in his blue jacket, which made him look very big. A generation earlier, my uncle Hermann had served in his company. He went to his seat and slowly leaned back, yawning, while he placed his hands on the arms of the chair. He, too, suffered from arthritis, although not in the hands like the Sheikh, but in the bones of his legs and feet. Then came the shouted orders that we were all waiting for: “Orderly, bring me a big bowl of thick soup!” He shouted like a shipwrecked sailor in his lifeboat, for besides his arthritis and other pains he was also suffering from diabetes. It seems that one of the symptoms of this disease is an insatiable appetite; and so it was in his case. His eyes glittered when the plate full of turnips, dry beans, crushed beans or whatever else was on the menu, appeared on the table before him. If there were potatoes, in the center of the plate he built up a kind of island. Then Wulkow brought forth a small packet of dietetic cookies and crumbled them into his soup. A sad spectacle, but for us, if I must be honest, an entertaining diversion that was repeated every day.

Kieber was a loudmouth, but not a syphilitic. It is true that people used to like to complain about the shortages. Peterson, a pale youth, who was seated at the end of the table, did not say a word about the affair. He had his reasons. He disappeared a few days later and I did not see him again for a long time.

Peterson was a friend of mine from school; I visited him in the military hospital before I went for the last time back to the front. He owed his disgrace to a very lovely woman, a bird of paradise with whom he had spend a night at Tivoli.

Kreppen, the doctor’s assistant, to whom he finally reported and to whom he finally confessed, swore: “There is nothing more dangerous than these itinerant princesses who appear at dusk.” He also said: “She did not miss anything. In comparison, the Turkish music is a bagatelle.”

When I arrived at Petersen’s room, I found him sitting on his cot. He looked terrible.

“Walter, how are you?”

“I’m a goner, I should bail out.”

“You’ll get better, you’ll see. And its less bad that you came directly, instead of first going through Krakauer.”

“I saw Krakauer, too. And things are not getting better. Every day they discover another problem.”

A unpleasant looking doctor entered the room.

“You must not spend the whole day in bed.” Having said that, he left.

Walter got up; there was only one chair in the room, and because of the nature of Walter's illness, no one else used it.

"They treat me like a leper here, which is just what I am, anyway. Especially the nurses: they wash their hands three times even though they only touch the doorknob. And they can't stand it when I get visitors. For them it's a burden."

He was right about that. He would have been a hundred times better off if he had been hospitalized as a battlefield casualty. That was a valid ticket: the bullet wound that led home. All kinds of chances belong among the "*desastres de la guerra*,"<sup>42</sup> but they are all viewed differently. It could have been an oasis where such an affair is taken with good humor, if the chief medical officer is a cynic. Orlando told us about his stay in a military hospital in Douai, where he killed the time telling dirty jokes. Each new admission was the occasion for a peculiar ritual. The newly arrived soldier was presented to the patients' committee, whose members were disguised as doctors; they interrogated him in depth, and he had to tell them why he was there, and he had to show them where he was wounded. Then they shook their heads: an unbelievable case.

As for Walter's case, there was nothing funny about it, neither for him nor for anyone else. He was from Eastern Frisia, and his conduct very closely approximated that of the hero of Popert's novel, *Helmut Harringa*. This work was a landmark in the history of the *Wandervögel* and of its educational policy in favor of abstinence. This book has been forgotten; it was a masterpiece from the pedagogical point of view, by virtue of its limitation to a single theme and its precise distinction between light and darkness. Harringa, an ideal Germanic figure, came to ruin because of the dissolute customs of the university students, which he basically despised. As a result of a drinking bout, which had been forced on him, he had a fleeting encounter with a prostitute; as a result, he was poisoned to the marrow. Harringa decided, as Walter would put it, to "bail out". What the doctors could not cure, the elements would cure: he swam out to sea until he was exhausted and drowned.

Harringa had a bright future in his personal life as well as professionally: he was intelligent, healthy, happily engaged. Popert wanted to describe an exemplary case; and he succeeded; Walter was a good example; also with respect to the destructive feeling of guilt. When I left him that day, he said to me: "The worst thing about it is that I can no longer fight alongside my comrades; especially now, when we also have to face the Americans."

## 102

Thanks to his profession, Popert had acquired a profound knowledge of the connections between intoxication, illness and transgression, for he was a judge in Hamburg. He edited a magazine called *Der Vortrupp* [The Vanguard] whose purpose was the reform of

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<sup>42</sup> In Spanish in the original.

everyday life. In Helmut Haringa that luminous figure makes his appearance, who would return later under various names, and finally under that of the Aryan.

At that time, the word had yet to acquire its dramatic meaning; such concepts are consumed like sparks in a candle, until they are extinguished or burn the candle holder. Words are not dangerous in themselves, except when we use them as weapons. Then they are transformed into slogans. Popert died in 1932, that is, just in time to avoid having to see how certain terms that he had coined would become fashionable. In any event, he was spared official honors, for the specialized encyclopedias branded him as a “half Jew”. “There is nothing they won’t do”, was what people said in such cases.

### 103

I did not see Walter again until after the war; it was a Sunday morning in Hannover and he was sitting in the sun on the terrace of the Kröpcke café. He shouted my name as I was walking by his table and I recognized him immediately, despite his thinning hair. His face also displayed some odd features. I sat down next to him and he told me that he had come from Hamburg on business. He worked there for an import-export firm and he was just getting ready to go to Brazil. After we chatted a little about this and that, I asked him: “Walter, you look very pale. How is your health? Are you in pain?”

He looked at me: “Don’t pretend you don’t know. From that moment I have not spent a single hour of my life without it giving me something to think about.”

After he dissipated most of his inheritance, in part due to the inflation, in part at various doctors’ offices, the last of these doctors declared that he was totally cured: *Restitutio ad integrum*. “Go forth and sin no more.”

The office where he worked was poorly heated. His desk was next to a window, looking out over the Alster; a draft blew through the casements of the window. He came down with one cold after another: chest colds, coughs, flus and rheumatic pains of every type. They affected his arms, or the back of his neck, or the right side of his face would freeze up when he laughed. Ever since the Battle of Flanders, Walter had a certain tendency to suffer from rheumatism.

“You know what? We have a real comedian in the office. One day when I came to work he said to me in a loud voice: ‘Peterson, my God! You don’t have syphilis, do you?’ Everyone broke into laughter, and I felt as if a knife blade was slicing through my flesh.”

He even ordered a cognac; I was surprised to see Walter, so sober in the past, drinking before dinner. Then he said to me, scrupulously pronouncing every syllable, as if he was trying to open a lock with a complicated key: “Phenomenology.”

He did not appear to be talking to himself, but it did not seem that he was talking to me, either. I asked him:

“Do you want to devote yourself to philosophy in the virgin jungle?”

“The word has as little to do with philosophy as the phrase ‘horse artillery brigade’ has to do with military affairs.”

“So, then, what else does it have to do with, for the love of heaven?”

“They are only words, difficult words.”

“You’re going to have to explain all of this to me in detail.”

“But it’s quite simple: my doctor predicted it. ‘If there is anyone who might suffer from paralysis, it would be someone like you, in whom the disease has reached the nervous system.’ And how is it diagnosed? What are the first symptoms? Speech disorders. The first sign is when you articulate words that way. Even a horse, when he is lame, at first only stumbles over serious obstacles. With words, just imagine it, something similar happens. And I examine my pupils with a flashlight every morning.”

“Walter, you must get these ideas out of your head.”

“You’re right. But I already told you back then that I was done for.”

A nightmare: a comrade who deployed his words, like antennae, towards the threatening darkness. This was horrible to behold for someone who had known him before. It was obvious that the fear of the disease tormented him more than the disease itself.

“I would have thought that someone like you, who was capable of enduring the test of the Battle of the Somme, was already cured of fear.”

“Maybe so. But when I went up to the line, I felt fear then, too. Now I am marching into the interior. And there, too, I want to drink (yellow fever, malaria, swamps). And then everything will be clear once and for all.”

## 104

Walter felt called to border zones. In his aspiration to disappear without a trace, he reminded me of Zerbino; this desire has deep roots and is probably instinctive. One seldom comes across a dead animal. When one of my cats was sick, it looked for a place to die in a quiet corner in the stable or the barn. This restlessness can be interpreted in a symbolic key; the Great Transition already casts its shadow. Many men make their travel plans shortly before they die.

The type of anxiety my friend suffered from when I met him is called, in medical jargon, *paralysisphobia*. It constitutes its own separate illness, and some of its victims, who did not even have the least chance of suffering from paralysis, committed suicide out of the

fear that was generated by the disorder. It is true that Walter had reasons to be concerned. Above all, he had an incompetent doctor.

This phobia is a subsidiary disease of the fear of going crazy, which preferentially attacks intelligent men. Such fears have little or nothing to do with the illnesses around which they hover like ghosts. The imaginary disease, however, due to the intervention of the imagination, can affect the patient more seriously than the real disease itself. Fear is experienced, above all, when one is going up to the line. Walter was right. After that, you don't have time to feel fear: reality erupts and takes the place of the imagination. In this way, the "fear of going crazy" is instead a sign of sanity. Between fantasy and madness a deep abyss yawns. Only when we have leapt across it, can the spirit enter into a new landscape. It is possible that then one feels liberated from fear; in any case, there are famous euphorias of this kind. One can also fear the road of return. In the works of Hölderlin one finds passages that suggest this possibility. Nietzsche assumed a hostile attitude towards Doctor Langbehn, "the German Rembrandt", who wanted to "make him see reason".

## 105

We may consider euphoria as the letter of safe-conduct with which the spirit frees itself from nature. Is it the spirit that expands or is it nature that frees it from its torment? When the torturers had exhausted their science on the body of Damians, he began to laugh. Here one encounters a limit to the power of tyrants.

Dying is hard, but everyone does it. Here, everyone reaches the level of a genius.

## *Beer and Wine II*

## 106

Excess is not a question of substance, but of character; alcoholism can have recourse not only to wine but also to drinks of the most various kinds.

Even in ancient Greece there were commentators who deplored the custom of engaging in drinking bouts at *symposia*. It was prohibited in Sparta, and at other times it was viewed with disdain. Since the guests spent a long time seated at the table, some of them went home drunk if they began to drink during the "second table", that is, after eating. And this, despite the fact that the wine was watered down at the ratio of three or four parts water to one part wine. The real meaning of the symposium consisted in the free and tranquil exercise of one's personality, especially in conversations, such as the priceless examples that have been passed down to us and which have been part of our cultural heritage for more than two thousand years. Even music was considered to be a hindrance. Thus, in the *Protagoras* it is claimed that only in the homes of uneducated people was it thought necessary to have young girls playing the flute at every dinner party, because in such homes the conversations and characters of the guests themselves

were not adequate company.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, in such homes money was squandered on exotic music, in total disregard of the fact that the presence of women, lute players, dancers and actresses only interfered with the dialogue carried out between educated persons. The flute player was sent away after the paean for which she provided the musical accompaniment, that is, as soon as the real drinking began. Burckhardt thought that they preferred old women to young and beautiful women. The fact that there were at least some exceptions is proven by the image of the enchanting slave girl who played the flute at the Court of Ludovico. The symposium also became more crude under the Romans: the two extremes are represented by the Banquet of the Seven Sages or Plato's Symposia, and Trimalchio's Dinner Party. Trimalchio, an enormously wealthy libertine and war profiteer, treated his guests and parasites to a program that was even more excessive than the programs we can now watch on television.

Unmixed wine was consumed in ritual libations and Dionysian festivals; in the latter case, solemn ecstatic intoxication formed part of the rite. Everywhere we look, we touch upon the distinction between the human and the religious approach, between mere social amusement and something different that supervenes to deepen or exalt, between the ordinary drinking party and the sacred ceremony, whose borders are gradually being erased. Wine, too, possesses its vulgate scriptures and its hieratic scriptures, its cheerfulness that is accessible to all and its hieroglyphic style with surprises before which one's smile freezes on one's face. We often encounter this expression in our primitive paintings, as if a great light was shining on a dark mirror. It illuminates the saints and their torturers and disappears with the advent of the Gothic world. Faces then acquire a personal dignity, and then an individuality that disappears again, in a kind of crystallization, while it becomes at the same time more concrete and more abstract. Van Eyck and Mabuse, Holbein and Frans Hals, Renoir and Manet, and finally photographs.

This depletion or whitening<sup>44</sup> creates the backdrop for new images; land is graded to make landing fields. We ask ourselves: is there really anything new, or are there new forms of return? The smile freezes on your face; it is, of course, followed by another, different smile, a knowing smile. If we want to seek its plastic representation, we must

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<sup>43</sup> From Plato's *Protagoras*, p. 211 of the Loeb edition: "... it seems to me that arguing about poetry is comparable to the wine-parties of common market-folk. These people, owing to their inability to carry on a familiar conversation over their wine by means of their own voices and discussions—such is their lack of education—put a premium on flute-girls by hiring the extraneous voice of the flute at a high price, and carry on their intercourse by means of its utterance. But where the party consists of thorough gentlemen who have had a proper education, you will see neither flute-girls nor dancing-girls nor harp-girls, but only the company contenting themselves with their own conversation, and none of these fooleries and frolics—each speaking and listening decently in his turn, even though they may drink a great deal of wine." [American translator's note]

<sup>44</sup> *Schwund* ("depletion or reduction") and *Weissung* ("whitening or the reduction of the various colors to white") are recurrent terms in Jünger. See note 3 and E. Jünger, *La tijera*, tr. Andrés Sánchez Pascual, Tusquets Editores (Ensayo 18), Barcelona, 1993, p. 224.

refer to archaic sculpture, and we find it there; such as, for example, the smile of the Apollo of Tenea. We may also encounter it in the most unlikely places, like Mexico. There are forms of ecstatic intoxication into which the spirit descends as if into Etruscan burial chambers.

## 107

The poet gives testimonial of his freedom with his poetry, just as a cat does with his whole being. That is why we cannot be surprised that both of them should be so often united by bonds of friendship. The poet conquers freedom in the word; no necessity, no coercion can break him or harm him. When he wields the word, even his silence becomes eloquent.

The cat does not obey orders. Or he either obeys them voluntarily, or he does not. He will not allow himself to be degraded to the level of a circus animal, like the dog, the monkey or the pig. From this point of view, our domestic cat represents the type of his family more purely than the lion or the tiger, whose domestication undoubtedly also poses some risks.

The cat does not fool around, he does not allow himself to be dressed up. He does not allow himself to be tamed, this would be contrary to his dignity, for which he possesses a kind of sense and which he also holds in great esteem. Nor is he inclined to bark or bite for no reason, but rather tends to avoid such situations. If he is cornered and has no way out, then he fights to the death.

Baudelaire is a friend of cats; he understood them, like other animals, in their profound nature. In this trait, we recognize the poet; he does not allow himself to be impressed only by the superficial charm of the game of impressionist colors. It is not surprising that he also venerates wine, to which he dedicated a cycle of splendid poems.

A higher freedom also inheres in wine; it has its own particular measure. It is a gift of the gods that demands to be treated in accordance with its rank. It does not adapt to cloudy countries and does not lend itself to frenzied bacchanals. Only once, as far as I can recall, have I witnessed in a wine producing country, that is, in Geneva, the spectacle of mass drunkenness, such as Dostoyevsky described in London, and the kind of thing that was not rare, until quite recently, on paydays in Northern Europe.

I assume that if Baudelaire had been asked which country was the homeland of Gambrinus, he would have mentioned, without any hesitation at all, Belgium; although he was undoubtedly unaware of the fact that this Gambrinus, to whom the invention of beer is attributed, was a Flemish king. Belgium was the target of Baudelaire's barbs, a stronghold of crude ignorance, the country of Percherons, giant dogs and beer. He defined the dog as the creature that felt nauseous when he smelled fine perfumes, but who panted with pleasure when he smelled excrement, and would even eat it. He loves dirt (*Kot*); the word, *Köter* ("puppy"), in German, is derived from this observation.



*One prefers the beer in countries,  
Where the wheat ripens noble and golden*  
(Hebbel)

Compared to wine, quantity is more important for beer; as is already demonstrated by the way it is consumed and the size of the containers in which it is served. The exceptions to the rule are the dark, strong, bitter beers that come with a layer of brown foam; they are served in silver mugs, after breakfast, while we converse about our troubles, for which we are the object of envy.

You do not sip beer. With a one-and-a-half-liter tankard of beer we could fill many wine glasses. Drinking, even if we consider it to be a mechanical action, must harbor a special pleasure; corpulent drinkers who could have come right out of a Jordaens painting give the impression, when they drink, of breathing a liquid element. We are reminded of times when one did not drink beer from mugs, but hydromel from horns.

Patience is one of the divine virtues. It is true that the high god Odin drinks in moderation, and only consumes special nectars with a magical power: the hydromel of the bards. He cleverly stole it from the daughter of the giant Suttung, who guarded the nectar. Thus, he became the king of the bards, but for having drunk from the spring of Mimir, which confers wisdom, he had to lose an eye. This strange spring is the equivalent for the Far North of the Tree of Knowledge; myths and legends endlessly and with diverse imagery describe the price that we must pay for knowledge. It confers immense power, but it is native to creatures with only one eye, the Cyclops. We do not stray even one inch from nature without losing something.

Thor, the second in command after Odin and ultimately the prince of the gods whom the Germans never easily renounced and to whom they remained faithful for many years, was famous as a wild drinker. He provided evidence for this in the castle of the giant Utgard-Loki, where he spent the night with his retinue and his he-goats. In the courtyard the giant challenged him to single combat and to eating and drinking contests, to jousts and weightlifting contests. Although Thor exhibited all his divine power, he was not quite at the level of his challenger, since it was the mother of the Titans, Earth herself, who was striving against him. She fought like an old nanny, like Madame Elle who embodied old age; she metamorphosed into a cat, behind which was concealed the Serpent of Midgard. Thor was able to lift her high enough to bow her back, while her head and her tail were still touching the earth. Finally, it was his turn to undergo the test of the drinking horn that had to be completely drained. Thor brought it to his lips three times; however, when he looked into the horn, it seemed as if he had only taken a sip. The giant, however, confessed to him that he had not even reduced the quantity of the drink by an inch, since the end of the horn was at the bottom of the ocean, so that the incredible swallow he took

was refilled by the water far from the deep. As they saw it, the tide was the repetition of this miracle in time.

## 110

Odin's hydromel, which conferred the gift of eloquence, recalls the nectar—"nine times sweeter than honey"—that conferred immortality on the Olympians. In their general features, the Aesir are more completely depicted than the Olympian gods, despite the fact that they share the same origins, they are of equal nobility in many cases, and in others they are superior.

In connection with the question of their origins I cannot resist engaging in a digression with reference to my reading of Suetonius. In Suetonius, as in other authors, one finds that the Tyrrhenians, too, as well as the Etruscans more generally, had bestowed upon their gods the name of Ases and Aeser (Icelandic: Aesir). The lightning oracle is also of Etruscan origin. In his biography of Augustus, Suetonius mentions among the omens that heralded the emperor's death the following sign: lightning struck a column erected in the emperor's honor and obliterated the C from the name, CAESAR AUGUSTUS, so that all that remained was the word, AESAR. It was therefore inferred that Augustus would undergo his apotheosis after one hundred (C) days had passed.

Like any oracle subsequently confirmed by events, this one, too, can be attributed to a chance event that, as rare as it may be, is no more unusual than a winning ticket in a lottery. This does not have the least effect on the profundity of the prophetic vision, thanks to which one can perceive such an event.

## 111

In Valhalla, in the golden palace of the Aesir, when a banquet was celebrated it was not nectar that was served, but hydromel. This is where the fallen warriors go, the *Einherier* who stand by Odin on the day of the Apocalypse, in the battle against the Giants. The leader of the Giants is Surtur, who marches to battle with the wolf Fenris and the serpent of Midgard and whose sword glitters "with more light than a thousand suns". Without human beings, neither the Aesir nor the Olympians could exist.

Valhalla borders on the enchanted glade of Glasor. It is towards this wood that the *Einherier* ride, after the morning libation of hydromel, and prepare for the final battle. The *Einherier*, "the lone warriors", sit at the banquet table as guests of Odin, friend and foe together, regardless of the cause for which they fell on the field of battle. This recalls Nietzsche's maxim: what counts is not a good cause, but a good war.

In the glade of Glasor a terrible battle takes place; no quarter is asked or given. But at nightfall the wounds are healed; the *Einherier* meet at the banquet table of Odin; there they are served hydromel in golden goblets.

## 112

Valhalla belongs to the same category as the Christian purgatory; it is its equivalent in an intact world, free and without fear. Valhalla is also a place of testing, an antechamber. It is temporary, just as the gods and the *Einherier* are mortal. From a Christian perspective, we would call these dead heroes “souls”, or perhaps “poor souls”; they, too, *perish* in the flames of the cosmic conflagration. Not even Odin will survive the cosmic conflagration, but only Alfadur, about whom nothing is known.

The gods and the *Einherier* live in more spacious homes and have a much longer lifespan than humans; and they are also invulnerable. It is a relation that is similar to that which prevails between Ideas and phenomena or between the species and individuals. But Ideas and species also have their time. Waves come and go; but someday, the ocean will cease to exist, too.

### 113

Valhalla is a reflection of the dwellings of the clan chiefs and wealthiest Nordic farmers. One may also reverse the relation: the dwellings of the clan chiefs are sublimated in Valhalla. The master of the house reigned from his seat of honor, in Odin’s place. In Iceland the throne was cast up from the sea, rather than taking possession of the land; the people settled where they landed. That was how Reykjavik was founded. It might happen that the homestead would host a large number of men, of children and kinfolk, of fellow warriors and thralls, especially during turbulent times. Many of them also had to be maintained during the winter. It was a major windfall when a whale was beached in the fall. In the feuds that followed the death of Thorkel Blund-Ketil’s son, some seven hundred men met in the assembly, the *Althing*, which was presided over by the two *godar*<sup>45</sup> who were responsible for resolving conflicts.

What they spoke about and debated in the hall, how they celebrated the deeds of their ancestors as well as their own, the songs they sang and the poems they improvised, how they fought among themselves and even how they descended into states of bloodthirsty fury, all these details we know from the sagas, whose compilation, at least by Snorri, constitutes a priceless gift.

Long are the nights, and long is winter in the North, which is concentrated into a single night. It gives the impression that something is gestating, as if between labor pains, which will lead to a great deed. A field laborer who only possesses a sword and a woolen jacket departs for the Court of the King of Norway, where, as so often happened during that era, he was overcome by a sense of apathy, a feeling that something was missing. He lounged about in the palace and abandoned himself to indolence, while the other guests hardly noticed him, and if they did they only made fun of him. This is how he spent the winter, until the visionary began to resent the ridicule to which he was subjected. He left the

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<sup>45</sup> Singular: *godi*. One of the leading chieftains of Iceland, who played a multi-faceted role that embraced not just political but also religious functions during the early days of the settlement.

king's hall and won the respect of the court by killing the most dangerous of the *berserkers*.

## 114

In the evocation of these nights, we must only emphasize one circumstance that pertains to the essence of our theme: *supervention*.

Banquets had their hierarchical order. Their highest form, the *blót*, was especially sacred and was dedicated to the gods. The beer, too, served in immense bowls, was consecrated according to special rituals. Later, this custom scandalized the Christians. Just as the latter preserved the use of the horse, although only for riding and not for sacrificing, they also continued to be voracious drinkers of beer, but only on the condition that no *godi* participated in the making of the beer. Otherwise, the devil would insinuate himself into the malt. Among other miracles that have passed down to us concerning Saint Columba, we are told that he caused a bowl of beer to shatter by making the sign of the cross over it. This beer had been consecrated to Wodan, and the Swabians were gathered around the bowl; we are told that in their language the bowl was known as the *cupa*. This must be a Latinized version of *Kump* or *Kumpf*, which is the term that is used even today among Swabians to refer to a "trough".

Thus, they sat at their table awaiting the arrival of Wod or Wodan, who was later transformed along with his horses, dogs and wild boars into the "wild hunters", although his power outlasted the era of Charlemagne. Until quite recently, the peasants of Holstein even reserved the last sheaf of wheat "for Wod's horse":

*Wode, Wode,  
Here is the forage for your horse!*

This religious form of ecstatic intoxication must have favored a relative silence. It lacked the enthusiasm of the feasts, with their songs, poetic recitals, combats, toasts and emptied horns.

The drinking horn was still "the heart of the banquet". Like the sword, it was a man's prized possession. Drinking had a more profound purpose than the mere evocation of the deeds of the ancestors, even more profound than the invocation of the mythical world. All of these things had to be kept separate, they had to be kept out along with the benevolent and the malevolent, salvation and accursedness, as long as the guests sat at the table and were getting drunk, as in the heart of a wooden ship, where silence gradually began to reign, and calm, at the same time that internal agitation grew.

Now the external world also became prophetic, it overflowed with portents. The sounds that came from the outside world seemed to be beckonings, warnings. The listener heard what lay behind the sounds: the howling of dogs, and the calls of birds, acquired an

oracular power. Perception was altered; it pierced walls, including the wall of present reality, in order to penetrate into the distant future.<sup>46</sup>

The fire flickers; now and then, the mistress of the house casts a glance at the hearth. Some women were famous for their skill in managing the *blót*; the efficacy of the sacrifice not only depended on the preparation of the beer, but also on the strict purification of the house and its furniture. We know from one of the first sagas that men who had decided to attack a farm would do so at a gallop, for if the mother of the house had enough time to prepare a *blót*, her sons would be invincible.

The drinking horn “is passed around the fire”; the men absorb this force, but not that other force that instills an indomitable fury in the *berserker*. The flame does not burn from the inside out, nor does it enter their swords, nor does it assume a noisy or violent form. It is rather silent and peaceful, but also oppressive. Time stretches out to unbearable limits. This does not mean that its duration is prolonged, but that it spreads and expands until it shatters into pieces. It loses its duration and gains weight. It becomes cutting and oppressive: the time of fate and the time of the Norns.

This explains the silence that is sometimes interrupted by a sigh, or by a moan. Here, something even stronger than armies and weapons, and even stronger than the flames of Surtur, is approaching: it is the breaking of the dawn of active fate. They are birth pains.

They do not surrender right away. The external voices weaken and almost extinguish them. The fire, around which the drinking horn was passed from hand to hand, burns without flickering, with a peaceful light that lies concealed within the heart of the scorching flame. Now they have entered; each feels it, each knows it, and it hardly matters that he perceives it in its form or in the radiance they all emanate. Now, time has been abolished.

This aspect is still apparent for hours in its effect on faces, hair, weapons and clothing. And also on the eyes that see the future from afar.

This explains their bravery. Anyone who has banqueted with them even once remains calm even while the great hall is burning down. It guides you through the flames. Thus, one can understand the terror that paralyzed populous cities when a handful of Vikings landed.

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<sup>46</sup> The reader will find a literary recreation of these anomalous states of consciousness, set precisely in the environment of the Nordic wilderness, in *A Visit to Godenholm* (1952). Inspired by a series of psychedelic experiences shared with A. Hofmann in the 1950s, this brief account uses elements of Nordic mythology as a backdrop for an inner journey to the “home” (*Holm*) of the “gods” (*Goden*). See E. Jünger, *A Visit to Godenholm*, tr. Juan Conesa Sánchez, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1983, p. 67 *et seq.*, concerning the extraordinary perception of external sounds.

Something undergoes a change in the structure of the world when approach takes place. Things are connected differently, because time is transformed. A strange force supervenes in measurable time, in everyday life, even in the chronology of history.

The same thing happens in the world of art, and is particularly evident in music. Time must be suspended, but it has a terrible weight. In order to lighten that weight, the human being invokes “the help of the gods”, by way of the offering: *offaron*, in ancient High German; *operari*, “to work”. The pain is present, but a pain and an effort that are intermingled with time as such: the pain of the goddess Hebe. Ascetics, penitents and flagellants must become familiarized with this pain; they behave like children who imitate reality.

Children play with wooden guns, but real guns are also playthings.

## 116

The visionary has a visible aura; we know similar effects in the world of physics. Certain impulses cause clouds of gas to glow, while others can cause matter to become transparent. Colors no longer radiate; they are emitted in soft waves, they overflow the borders of the things that are their receptacles.

During those occasional moments when we have an acute sense of well being, we already enjoy certain reverberations, when leaving the sauna and plunging into the snow, for example, after a long breakfast, while recovering from an illness, and also while absorbed in the contemplation of works of art. A work, and even a human being, can radiate a large amount of force; then we are obliged to close our eyes or avert our gaze.

When Moses returned from Mount Sinai he had to cover his face; the blaze of light from his face was too blinding for the people. Such illuminations are soon extinguished, but still reverberate for a long time. Existence, in the highest sense of the word, means approach that is endlessly renewed.

## 117

Art, if it is “important”, would have to be existence in this highest sense, and the history of art can be contemplated in the light of this fundamental question: has it achieved approach?; and, if so, to what extent? The artist knows it or rather feels it, and knows the anxiety that is connected with creation, the passion of the midwife. It is unavoidable and, like the invisible heart of the flame, is not related to its yield, but to its meaning. This explains the fever of the limelight that affects the great actors, musicians and singers, even at the peak of their glory. They sense that they have to give of themselves something more than, and at that same time something very different from, mere virtuosity.

## *On Vulgarit*<sup>47</sup>

Although the Germans continued to hold group banquets, after the imposition of the new religion the faithful had to stop drinking beer that had been consecrated by *godar*. Which allows us to deduce that this blessing of the beer took place not only before the *blót*. So, too, right up to our time, one prays before each meal, and not only at “the table of the Lord”.

It is a different question whether, on extraordinary occasions, a certain other ingredient was added to the cauldron. Until the modern era there have been endless debates concerning the existence of such inoculations, which were often obscure and prohibited. There is mention, in particular, of Belladonna, which was also employed in the potions of sorcerers and witches. Concerning the altered states of consciousness induced by this plant, Heimann’s study, *The Effects of Scopolamine: A Comparative Investigation of Electro-Encephalographic-Psychopathology* [*Die Scopolaminwirkung; vergleichend psychopathologisch-elektroencephalographische Untersuchungen* (1952)], is instructive. Among its other effects, major distortions in the perception of time have been observed.

Whether or not such ingredients were tossed into the cauldron is of no more value than the key to a house or a desk. The door to the house might be unlocked; then you do not need the key. Huxley overestimated its role. On the other hand, every modulation of temporal consciousness has a pedagogical value: thus the abbreviation of time, which reaches its highest degree in the orgasm, as well as the expansion of time in torture.

## 119

In the Nordic countries they drink as they have always done. The quantity of liquid that flows from the drinking horn or from the tankard cannot be considered of minor importance. It constitutes an essential part of the act of drinking. With this method of drinking one does not quench one’s thirst, in any case not thirst in the usual meaning of the word. The slogan of a beer manufacturer that I see now and then on billboards expresses it quite well: “Thirst is pleasant only with beer.”

The image accompanying that advertisement does not seem so successful to me: a desert under a cruel sun, over which floats, like a mirage, a full glass of beer, glistening with drops of condensation. We need only observe how a herdsman drinks in the desert to grasp how little this kind of thirst has to do with dry heat. The sip he occasionally takes from his water-skin is rather hesitant, in any case, measured. Endless consumption of great quantities, even of pure water, would be dangerous. Such men are dry and shriveled like lizards. Mohammed knew what he was doing when he prohibited wine, without

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<sup>47</sup> The original title of this chapter is *Zum Grobianismus*. In German, *Grobian* is the name of a comic figure, inspired by the names of saints like *Cassian* and *Cyprian*, and was coined by Sebastian Brant (1457-1521) in *The Ship of Fools*, based on the adjective *grob* (coarse, vulgar, uncouth). Brant’s invention led during the 15<sup>th</sup> century to a subgenre of literature called *grobianismus*.

taking into account the fact that he did not need it himself, or needed it as little as a person sitting on a pile of treasure needs the key to the treasury. Excessive libations and Pantagruelisque feasts are characteristic of the Germanic banquets. Myth already tells us of boars and goats whose meat is ever replenished, regardless of how much is carved, and inexhaustible drinking horns.

Such intemperance has, like everything else, its obverse; thus, the lazybones has his counterpart in the hunter who kills the bear whose skin will later serve to clothe the lazybones.<sup>48</sup> He hunted it in the grand old style, with his dogs and his spear and sword, in the snow-covered forest. More than one thing came of this, without which the world would not be what it is. Where would we be without the Vikings and the Varangians, the Goths and the Vandals, the Angles and the Saxons, the Franks and the Alemanni?

In each case one finds a spatial or temporal plunge into crude pleasure, such as is preferred by types like Trimalchio or Gargantua. Among the Germans this figure is even more accentuated insofar as excess is a trait that is inherent to their character.

Hydromel and beer are appropriate drinks for getting blind drunk, while wine, due to its intrinsic qualities, does not lend itself to such uses. In the chronicle of Zimmern we read about a visit to the palace of a Rhineland count at whose Court it was considered to be a heroic deed to pour large quantities of fine wines. When the guest wakes up with a hangover, the Majordomo is at his bedside and cures it with a large goblet of wine. The heir drank, in a short time, an ancient fortune.

As everyone knows, whole tribes of Indians were decimated by drinking excessive quantities of liquor. During a cruise in the Far North, I saw, every morning, three ghosts staring blankly at their breakfast: the captain, with the engineer and the first officer, pale, exhausted, punished by their nocturnal excesses. On the archipelago of Spitzbergen, we docked at a port where the monthly ration of strong alcoholic beverages had been distributed the day before we arrived. A sepulchral silence reigned over the houses where the inhabitants were sleeping off their drinking binges. At such latitudes, prohibition becomes a legitimate act of defense, and a reaction of the survival instinct.

## 120

Guilds and fraternities, traders from the commercial districts and circles of university students, reformed certain customs involving the consumption of beer, such as “passing

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<sup>48</sup> An untranslatable play in words, involving *Barenhäuter* (bearskin, that is, a lazybones, a slothful person) and *der den Bären erlegt* (bear hunter). The relation between beer, Germans, lazybones and hunters might have been suggested to Jünger by, apart from the *Germania* of Tacitus, Wilhelm Ruer's composition, *Tacitus and the Ancient Germans*, composed in 1872 for the *Bierzeitung der Leipziger Burschenschaft Dresdensia*: “on a summer afternoon/in the shadows of the sacred grove/lying on bearskins/on both banks of the Rhine/the tribes of the ancient Germans.../They lie around on skins of bears./And drink together endlessly.”



the horn” according to the ritual order. Those were times and places when, for knights and monks, students, *goliards* and *Landsknecht*, social life was reduced to one big brawl, and crude gluttony. Already the chronicles that tell us of the preparations for weddings and other celebrations lead us to fear that there was not much room left for the more refined enjoyments. There was a *rage du nombre* that recalls Rabelais, in whose work, for example, about three thousand six hundred sheep were devoured for breakfast. In that book, after a siege, the people combed their hair to dispose of the cannonballs that had become entangled there; the teeth of the combs they used were made out of elephant tusks. Indeed, when it is treated by a great author, gluttony acquires a certain kind of charm. Shakespeare’s Falstaff is a classic example; not even the Puritans could deny their sympathy for this character. The author’s power transforms what it illuminates into gold; at least it confers upon it the splendor of a Flemish still-life.

In their natural setting, such types are less attractive; thus, for example, the knight Hans von Schweinichen (born in 1552), who placed himself at the service of a bankrupt Silesian prince, mostly by drinking a lot of alcohol with him. Like Falstaff, they are surrounded by dissolute followers who would thrive with particular opulence during the Baroque era.

Grimmelhausen offers in his *Simplicissimus* an image of the shocking disorder caused by the Thirty Years War. We have not completely recovered from those years. The 17<sup>th</sup> century snatched away from us what it granted other countries, it vulgarized what in other places was differentiated and softened. The countries of central Europe always run the risk of becoming the place where not only their own inhabitants, but also foreigners, come to thresh their grain.

The transition to global order is also recognized in the fact that the advantages and disadvantages of a country’s geographic situation are no longer of such overriding importance. Thus, England has lost its insular quality, and perhaps we will also shed our central European traits.

## 121

Vulgarity always finds a refuge in universities and has been preferentially camouflaged there as academic freedom. In the Middle Ages it was impossible, or at least mortally dangerous, to exclude oneself from the circles of compatriots who, although they offered protection, also made the initiates undergo tests that were in very poor taste. When the recruit was finally admitted to the student corporation, he then treated the newly admitted initiates the same way.

This collegial spirit also found a welcome soil in which it could thrive in the military and royal schools. Only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was it eliminated in part. Even just before the First World War, the student who was not a member of such a group was considered to be, by virtue of a strange inversion, a “savage”; he was suspected of practicing secret vices.

This closed order, however, benefited the students. They could oppose the bourgeoisie and even the nobility. The bearing of arms as the hallmark of the free man was a custom that lasted right up until the Rococo period; after the Revolution, this right was restricted to military personnel. Where it was customary to drink to excess and people were quick to draw their swords, bloody fights were inevitable. Not only novels, but memoirs, too, are full of such incidents. People went out onto the street to settle their accounts. In *Simplicissimus* there is an account of a duel between a knight and an infantry soldier who wins the fight thanks to a ruse. Casanova also relied on an unexpected knife thrust after a feint, by way of which he dispatched, almost automatically, his *rencontres*. Or at least that is what he boasted, just as he bragged about punishing a journalist from Cologne with blows from his cane, after the journalist had referred to him as the “depraved” Casanova.

The use of the dagger, in which brute force is not so important, is more elegant than hitting someone with your fist. This can be observed even in nature, in the combat of the diving bird, for example, which Linnaeus named *Philomachus pugnax*. During its mating ritual, as in medieval jousts, ceremonial simulations of combat take place.

The German prefers to fight with a slashing sword. The pointed weapon enjoys, in his eyes, less esteem, like the cat compared to the dog, and wine compared to beer. It is true that at Jena, even during the times of Laukhard, they fought with saber and foil; the result was a grotesque game of acrobatics. A thrust that penetrates the flesh, without touching any bones, was called *Anschiss*.<sup>49</sup>

One can consider the student duel, as well as the bullfight—transformed into a bloodless entertainment in southern France and Portugal—as the transition from an archaic vestige to a sport, if old and new prejudices are not inextricably intertwined with it. *Querelles allemandes*: the comrades fought over things that have long since been extinguished.

As for what really matters, that is, as an initiation test in male associations, the duel is an antiquated institution. Without the feudal tradition it is just one sport among others, less dangerous than boxing, skiing or soccer. Or, with respect to the “test of character”, piloting an aircraft, ski jumping and other tests typical of the dynamic world. And finally, one can emerge with flying colors both from the fencing hall as well as from the space capsule and nonetheless be, “when all is said and done”, as Schleiermacher used to say, a failure.

The human being who dominates the *modus operandi*, but who fails in the substance, is, in general, one of the tragic figures, and maybe even *the* tragic figure, of the modern world. Perfect even in downfall.

## 122

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<sup>49</sup> *Schiss* means both “excrement of a small animal” and, in student jargon, “to chicken out”. With the prefix *an-* it calls to mind in the speaker of German an association with the verb, *Anschliessen*, “to shoot someone, wounding him, but without killing him”.

Having mentioned Laukhard, we have once again returned to our theme, properly speaking, for we are “not done with beer yet”. This is not to say that Laukhard (1758-1822), a student of theology, composer, and vagabond, a soldier who served both Frederick as well as the French, an impoverished rector and novelist, would have been content with beer. He was a worthy disciple of Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, who taught theology in Giessen, presided as general superintendant over a Protestant Church and departed from this world as the owner of a tavern with a bad reputation in Halle. His nickname was “Iron-head Bahrdt”.

Bahrdt sympathized, at least, with Salzmann, Basedow and the philanthropic ideas that were cropping up everywhere; that softening of customs that Laukhard reviled as “the fancies of the *petit-maître*”. Not without reason, he saw the cities of Leipzig and Gottingen as places of *petit-maîtres*. Once, when he was out drinking with some students, I don’t remember in which city, he tied his shot glass to a string so that he did not swallow it accidentally while drinking, or so he told his astonished drinking companions.

In Bahrdt all the traits of crude affability were united such as they were in their origins; he would go on drinking sprees at the expense of philistines, from whom he scrounged money and whom he ridiculed, the spirit always ready for a laugh, but also for fraternity, and dissolute binges until dawn.

He could not have spent so much time drinking such large quantities of beer if that beer had been brewed with a high alcohol content. This only made the party last longer, however; it takes a long time to get good and drunk. Some beer brewing towns are famous for their particularly light varieties that are only made in the summer. With Laukhard, it was not always clear whether he was still drinking, or if he had come back again for more. He would sit, in the morning, in a bathrobe, with a long pipe, on the terrace of a tavern, on the market square, waiting to be served. It was not rare for him to deliver his lectures in that get-up.

His sense of humor was also crude; his favorite kind was the “practical joke”, usually at the expense of third parties. A poor beadle, by the name of Eulenkapper, was the target of so many pranks on the part of Laukhard and his buddies, that the unfortunate fellow almost committed suicide. The biggest such joke of all was known as the “general stabling”. This involved some twenty or more inveterate drinkers who formed a circle, if possible in front of a house where professors and their wives lived, and there, while engaging in a lot of obscene talk, they emptied their bladders of all the beer that they had so immoderately consumed.

Laukhard loved obscenity; it was one of the main topics of his conversation. In addition, he was always eagerly on the lookout for words and expressions useful for such a purpose. He boasted, among other things, of being the author of an extensive “obscenology”; the work appears to have been lost, unless it is someday rediscovered, like de Sade’s *120 Days*. Now would be a good time.

Nonetheless, we should not deny Laukhard's claim to genius; he was deeply proficient in the classical and modern languages, he had read ancient and contemporary literature and he was versed in the Holy Scripture. He formulated accurate judgments. The backwaters of history and of society would stagnate, unexplored, like the swamps at the source of the Nile, if such minds do not sometimes get lost in their depths. Reuter, with his *Schelmuffsky*, must also be mentioned in this regard.

Obscenity flourishes, with particular exuberance, in rarified air, amidst a lack of freedom and a suffocating atmosphere. The people drink like fish, get in fights and commit obscenities because they find nothing better to do. The quantity of genius and power that is wasted, and what this waste implies in terms of ruined lives, we can only imagine by reading examples of anthologies of obscenity like *The Lahn Tavern-Keeper's Wife*.<sup>50</sup>

Here we touch upon a fundamental difference as compared to the classical lazybones; in this respect the latter were less obscene. Even Tacitus boasted about this.<sup>51</sup> Above all, they were unfamiliar with the usages and customs of the *Komment*.<sup>52</sup> They drank and fought when they felt like it; which was almost always. Compulsion would have led them to do the opposite.

When we ask ourselves why freedom is no longer common freedom in this sense, we might say that the reason for this involves, first of all, room to roam, or open spaces. But even in the past, space could be very narrowly circumscribed. Then it was necessary to seek refuge in the forests and to take your freedom with you. And this forest still exists today, even in the heart of the metropolis.

There is another, more important, prerequisite for that kind of freedom: back then they did not know the fear of death. And with this, the world is transformed. In those days, there was a lot of open space and little fear. Today, there is less and less open space, while there is more and more fear. This does not affect freedom by any means, since freedom is always equally near and available. Montherlant expressed this idea quite well in a good saying: "La liberté existe toujours. Il suffit d'en payer le prix."

Anyone who wants to obtain freedom without paying a price for it shows that he does not deserve it.

## 123

"Beer and Wine": the meditation has overflowed somewhat, it has brought us a long way. As a key, beer is rather crude, but when the *cella* is opened, the difference vanishes.

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<sup>50</sup> An obscene song with many different verses, famous in the folklore of German students.

<sup>51</sup> Jünger is referring to Chapter XV of the *Germania* of Tacitus.

<sup>52</sup> The *Komment* was the code of the *goliards* that regulated compulsory drinking.

The more noble nature of wine harmonizes very badly with compulsory drinking. However, there were more slaves in the wine grape-growing countries. Who, undoubtedly, came from the border regions. When the waves of the festival are radiating outward, the differences dissolve. Slaves became masters in the Lupercalia.

We are approaching freedom: we have a presentment of liberation, we enjoy it in the festival. In his cycle of poems about wine, Baudelaire showed that ecstatic intoxication, not only of lovers, but also of the beggar and the murderer, contains freedom.

Forgetting does not liberate. Instead, forgetting announces the approach of freedom. The absent-mindedness of old age shows that the essence is beginning “to withdraw from the world of appearances”. Many things become irrelevant. Undoubtedly, ecstatic intoxication is not just an allegory, but in time absolves from the mere event, from the changing events.

*Me voilà libre et solitaire!  
Je serai ce soir ivre-mort;  
Alors, sans peur et sans remord,  
Je me coucherai sur la terre.*<sup>53</sup>

They will always be allegories. Hölderlin was more laconic: “*Once*, I lived like the gods”; and nothing more.

### ***In the Footsteps of Maupassant***

#### **124**

Amidst the tedium of the trenches, like many of my comrades I entertained myself by dismantling, every now and then, the projectiles that were lying about on the ground. I only renounced this pastime after having an accident with an unexploded English rifle-grenade. A tiny capsule full of mercury fulminate exploded with greater force than I had anticipated. I was certainly not mistaken in my assessment based on its shape that it was a projectile meant to detonate rapidly, but I had nonetheless underestimated its charge. Even so, I was lucky that it did not cost me more than the tip of my thumb. Something similar happened with the piece of hashish that I took a few years later.

First, however, I want to introduce a few incidents that took place, to use a simile, on a terrain adjacent to that experience. As I have said, during the wars I read a lot, or, in any case, those who preferred books over card games and endless conversations looked forward to the opportunity to read. The spectacular part of war, the one that plays the leading role in the chronicles, is minute in extent, compared to its grey stretches, with

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<sup>53</sup> A verse from “Wine and the Murderer”, from *The Flowers of Evil*: “Here I am free and all alone! / I’ll get blind drunk tonight; / then without fear, and without remorse, / I’ll lie down on the ground”. Charles Baudelaire, “The Murderer’s Wine”, in *The Flowers of Evil*, tr. William Aggeler, Academy Library Guild, Fresno, 1954.

tedium and a lot of time spent waiting. For months, I lay in wait for what had to come: in the shelter, in the bunker, in the camps and reserve battalions, in the barracks, next to the telephone. To have time for reading, it was an advantage to be a corporal or, later, a captain; in any case, a kind of police officer. On the Siegfried Line, I had spend the whole night, in full battle kit, without receiving any communications. I was, however, in good company: the complete works of Tolstoy.

But I have not yet referred to the military hospitals. In one of them, I think it was in Valenciennes, a small volume by Maupassant, along with other books, helped me to while away the time. From the short stories collected in that volume, two stand out from the rest: one was *The Horla*, in which the descent into madness takes on appalling forms; and the other was a study on intoxication using ether that provided some food for thought. I do not have it with me now, but I recall that Maupassant experienced the effect of this state of intoxication as an acoustic revelation. He describes it as a dialogue that can be heard by the inner sense of hearing. However, hearing cannot be separated from the participation of the hearer, who either assumes one role or the other, and in this way he splits into two interlocutors. The speaker begins to hear himself and is surprised by his inner dialectic. It is reminiscent of “automatic writing”. He has hardly even expressed his reasons, when a second voice expounds the opposed reasons. The latter are more compelling. Then the first voice returns and penetrates even more deeply. Not with words, but as the murmur of a river that flows nearby. Nor does it do so with sentences; rather like a duet that, from the shadows of the garden, penetrates into the dreams of the sleeper. With increasingly more lucidity and therefore deeper and deeper; the reasons gain in their convincingness, and finally touch bottom. It must be the primordial bottom, which does not in turn lie on any other basement layer. The synthesis dissolves.

This is how I view this descent to the sources of knowledge today. At the time, I read it simply with the eagerness with which we follow the movements of a daring acrobat or the leap of a swift creature, with steady nerves, a greyhound or a horse, as it overcomes an obstacle. The flanks tremble, the nostrils twitch with excitement. We often find ourselves with these doped types, especially among aristocrats; the race is often spellbinding, but brief.

Maupassant was a sensitive, perhaps even a hypersensitive in the way the term is used by Reichenbach. Which explains his success as well as his failure. The Germans appreciate him more than his compatriots; it is probably the case that in France his discoveries seem all too obvious, too real. Some years ago I had a conversation about this question with Friedrich Sieburg, who shared my passion for this author, and even more recently I asked Julien Gracq about the same topic; he smiled with indulgence.

## 125

Back then, in Valenciennes, my reading was particularly beneficial for me. The times and the atmosphere were grey. The chief medical officer must have been a man of little imagination; otherwise, every time they transported a corpse to the cemetery he would have ordered that they should only beat the drum when it was not possible to hear it from

our wing of the hospital. And because it was a large military hospital and many people died there, the drums never stopped all morning.

Our room was small. It contained four beds; in the middle of the room there was a table where Jochen von Stülpnagel played *Skat* with two other wounded men. They only interrupted their game during visits and meals. One of the men had bladder problems; every two hours a nurse came and inserted a catheter in him. Before she left with the catheter, he had to try to urinate; to stimulate his urination, she hissed, as coachmen do with their horses.

It must have been raining buckets; there was also a canal in the vicinity, and a towpath where I went to take the air. As long as my state of mind was only melancholy I could bear it; but sometimes it became depressive. When I look back at that time, it seems like a miracle that we always managed to float rather than drown in the lethargy of one of those lakes of despair.

I could look in my diaries for details of the time I spent in that hospital, but I find it more pleasant to allow them to merge with my memories of other hospital stays. The profound nature of a fever is not measured with degrees of temperature. It seems to me that I possess a more exact memory for books and their contents than for the events of everyday experience, even for the events of my own life. Events are more or less the results of chance. They stick to you the way barnacles and algae cling to the *Cristo Sottomarino* [“The Christ of the Abyss”] in the Gulf of Genoa. Sometimes, divers have to descend to free the image of these adherences. We demand the same thing from authors: a world that is more or less liberated from chance.

## 126

The use of ether was familiar to me, since my father had given me *The Beetles’ Friend*. This volatile and dangerously combustible substance formed part of the equipment of the entomologist. It causes a lethal narcosis, but, so it would seem, of a euphoric nature. This can be inferred from the fact that the little corpses of the insects remain soft and their appendages flexible; not rigid, as is the case after death by cyanide gas.

I never would have imagined that it was possible to work with a substance with effects like those described by Maupassant. Ether was considered to be the quintessential volatile and flammable substance, almost immaterial. The ecstatic intoxication that the elixir by the same name causes had to be lighter and more spiritual than a vulgar state of drunkenness. I could not pass up the opportunity to try it. Maupassant gave me a good idea.

The opportunity seemed to have arrived when, in 1918, I spent a few days convalescing in Hannover. My observations about places are also valid for my observations about my wounds: they are gradually diluted in one’s memory, chance events that are now almost indistinguishable from each other. In any case, they were progressively getting worse, as if a sniper was drawing a bead, ever more accurately, on my heart. It began with the legs,

rose to the head and finally got to the chest; each time, more resoundingly and with more serious consequences.

I still wore a small bandage, half concealed by my cap, when I went to the military hospital to confirm my rehabilitation; it was quite noticeable that the mobilization had included the *triarii*. The possibility that the war might be lost never even occurred to me; I refused to accept it.

On the top floor of the military hospital a commission was assembled; it consisted of a doctor, an officer, a secretary and various hospital personnel who came and went. The sick and the wounded, most of whom were rehabilitated, entered in small groups, in alphabetical order. In the lobby, together with other men, Kolshorn was waiting, who had the same kind of wound as mine: a shot that had grazed the upper right side of his head. His sign was Aries: tough, but hardly of a spiritual character. These traits of ram and goat were already manifested in his infancy. He did not want to rejoin his regiment because of bitter disputes. His love affairs had caused him to lose track of time and place. Thus, in the vicinity of Tourcoing, he shut himself away for three whole days with a woman of "Flemish blood", oblivious to the fact that we had resumed our march a long time before. This story still haunts him; however, once he was on the railway line he met another woman, this one a hairdresser from Linden: she was waiting for him down below, at the gates.

We were summoned at the same time; Kolshorn was just in front of me in the line and he told me about his problems. He had headaches and he could not lift his arm.

"In what part?", the chief doctor asked him, as he examined his clinical report.

"On the right side: where I am wounded."

"Good, you will soon recover. You will see. You will have another fourteen days of rest; then you will be able to pull up trees by their roots."

As for my case, I, too would have preferred that I should be prescribed rest, but mentally I was already well on the way to being cured. Dr. Sternheim, the chief medical officer of the reserves, was famous as a good pediatrician. He had also been our family doctor, even in the most literal sense of the word, since we had lived in the same house, on the corner of Bödecker and Wedekindstrasse. My mother held him in very high esteem; he had cured us of measles. As a pediatrician, reservist and intelligent Jew, he did not really fit in there; he would have liked to have more elbow room. This was not exactly what was expected of him. He only found himself there provisionally.

We descended the worn stairs; I smelled the odors of watery soup and phenol. On the ground floor I said goodbye to Kolshorn, who went off to Linden with his hairdresser. I saw them go; they went arm in arm, which in the old days would not have been acceptable, not even with one's legal wife. Undoubtedly, he had swallowed the whole bait on the first bite. In general, he had the gift of being able to carry out rapid and



changing maneuvers of approach. During the following years, I ran into him in the city increasingly more often, always past midnight, on solitary walks, without his ever going into details about his itineraries.

I had yet to go to Ritterburg, which is in the vicinity of the city. It was the morning when I visited Walter, who was ruminating over plans to commit suicide. Perhaps it was not just by chance that it was precisely at that moment when I conceived of the idea of undertaking an experiment with ether.

## 127

How did I arrive at this idea? Was it curiosity, boredom or recklessness? It seems to me that I was satisfied with my situation; much more satisfied, in any case, than I am today, when I view it in retrospect.

The streets and squares of the city, where the crowds of wounded men ebbed and flowed, looked as sad as a worn-out old shirt. At the beginning of the war everything seethed as if in a beehive before the departure of the swarm. Now it was nearing its end; the remnants of the people returned, "exhausted by their flight and without spoils". Their power had been dissolved into foam.

All of this seems grey and unpleasant to me today, just as it seems strange that I preserved my good mood in the "battles of materiel". However, youth has a different calendar, it lives off its own forces. I had made a date to meet a nurse that evening; she was counting on me being there. She arrived at the eaves of the forest in a striped hospital gown: "I can only go out like this after sunset." She therefore knew what to expect; time could not do anything to us. Here, too, I have forgotten her name, even her first name; only this makes the memory strong, and disturbing.

## 128

Already during my last years at the institute I had lived, with great pleasure, in the neighborhood that extends approximately from Friedrichswall to Calenberger Strasse, which Leritzky called "Calebutz" Street, to indicate that it was not at all a residential district; at least not for married couples. Narrow alleys, small houses, poor people; but there were also some eccentric types. For years I was a regular customer at the house of the old man Lafaire, who knew much more about books than any of the antique dealers that I have known. Later I was a frequent visitor at the home of the sculptor of masks, Gross, who lived in the shadow of the Church of the Holy Cross, and who at that time was carving his "talking birds" from wood. That is what he called some geese whose necks ended in phalli. In Waterloo Square there is still a clandestine Guelph movement, which goes very far back in time.

During the war, I was billeted for a few days in the house of a plump innkeeper; her husband, a reservist, was in Belgium. She was a conductor on the Doren trolley line, and was away from the house most of the day. She did not get home until midday, in her

uniform and cap, to clean my room. Which was fine by me, since my work required solitude.

So I came back to the house after I had said goodbye to Walter, and acquired a little ether, in the vicinity of the “Black Bears”. How did Maupassant use it to get intoxicated? I did not remember. Since then, however, I had read about the “ether addicts” in my father’s library, and I realized that they, too, had fallen victim to the fatal nature of the drug and that it did not take them long to die, constantly forced to double their dose. They drank the ether and finally consumed it in unusual quantities. Periodically, this pleasure has wreaked havoc as a popular vice, as in Ireland and Lithuania. It seemed that on market days the air was tainted with ethyl vapors.

It seemed to me that it would be good enough to sniff it, once the bottle was uncorked. I “inhaled” it, as the pharmacists say, soaking my handkerchief with a few good splashes and wrapping it on my face. To top it off, I put the bedspread over my head. The effect was immediate.

## 129

The ascending phase could not have lasted very long, for when I woke up I saw that it was still some time before dinner. I also had an appetite, or at least it seemed that I did. “Undoubtedly, a kind of intoxication for people who are in a hurry.”

After putting some loose change and rationing coupons in my pocket, I put on my hat and gloves, and, to take a little air, I walked towards downtown, passing by the Friedrich wall. At Waterloo Square and its environs a mass of military personnel of every rank swarmed, as had been the case for centuries. Here, I had to be prepared to salute, that is, I had to observe that scrupulous ceremonial of “military honor”. Sometimes I had to give them and sometimes return them, depending on the rank of the insignias that glittered, more or less clearly, but not without inviting misunderstandings, on caps, collars and epaulettes. This is reminiscent of the antennae of some species of the *Silex* beetle; two or three of its members are phosphorescent, and thanks to their glow, animals can see them from afar, when they fly through the forest in the shadows.

I felt that I was at the top of my game, and even had the impression that I was moving with great ease and that I could observe the transitions with a striking precision. However, as the experts point out, a sharpening of the senses and of the intellect are the usual results after getting intoxicated on ether. Thus, for example, they tell us of a ten-year-old boy who, after a minor operation, had become addicted to ether, which he inhaled or swallowed, and secretly obtained greater and greater quantities of the drug from pharmacies. He stole from his parents to satisfy his addiction, which had become incurable. In school, he was distinguished for his brilliant academic performance. Above all, he easily solved mathematical problems when he had awakened from his ether-induced stupor. He died at the age of nineteen; according to Lewin, of a heart attack. Just before he died, he was consuming a liter of ether every day. This is reminiscent of the fantastic quantities that De Quincey used to take with laudanum.

My walk led me past the Leibniz monument to the street that curves from Waterloo Square to Friedrichswall. To the left is the fortress next to the Leine with its fountains, to the right a small tavern. Behind, the barracks, the arsenal, and a little further the Schrader public baths: a familiar picture where little has changed for generations.

Then I turned towards Friedrichswall, a beautiful and peaceful street where my grandfather and I used to walk hand in hand. To the right, the “new” city hall, behind the Masch, to the left a neighborhood where remnants of the old urban walls are still standing. Now it was busy; during the lunch break, soldiers in uniform surged down all the side streets. As I said, I was having some fun with the ceremonial of saluting. Generally speaking, we must every now and then put ourselves through bothersome experiences and practice them like a game. This surprises pedants, who take it for an excess of zeal.

In addition to this attitude, we must also take into account the penetrating optimism that is the after-effect of the drug. The dose can be gauged, from superficial stimulation to the depths of total intoxication. One could see persons who loitered around busy streets, with a handkerchief soaked in ether held up to their faces, because their landlady could not stand the penetrating odor that impregnated the house. And that is how De Quincey also traversed the city of London. In such cases, the external world is allowed to participate in the game. It begins to obey, as if led by the conductor with his baton.

It is indisputable that with a little drop one more easily confronts everyday obligations, even those that one has postponed dealing with for a long time. “It makes it easier to get started.” Old veterans often toss back a small glass before the shooting starts: “liquor that hits the mark”.

All along the sidewalk I saw the insignias of various ranks appear and disappear like the numbers, colors and images in a card game. Sometimes I was the first to salute, at other times I had to wait, depending on whether a big fish or a subordinate appeared. I saluted first, or second, or simultaneously, depending on the various branches of the military or ties of comradeship. A simple dispenser of worm medicine, that is, a doctor mobilized with his caduceus, did not pose any problem. Then, a second lieutenant comes along, a real Prussian-type bastard, with almost congenital inhibitions. To describe the salute that one must give in this kind of situation would require a whole book.

They passed by as if in a kaleidoscope. Formalities and rules were still in effect, although with uncertain and ill-defined borders. I saw people I knew, like my future runner, the regiment’s tailor, Wodrich, and the aviator Bittrich, who was a test pilot for aircraft manufacturers and was swimming in gold. A messenger with his shoulder bag went by. For Wodrich, the world was on the verge of falling apart as far as he was concerned: the

last straw was when he heard that a captain had stolen a sausage from the market: some captain! Bittrich, who survived the war, would later become a real big fish.

*Salut au monde!* My state of mind was exultant, as if I was in a shooting party, I felt like a fish in water, I was in full control of the rules of the game. This was merely one aspect, but I did not feel any less pleased, like someone driving on his way to a date who entertains himself by taking the curves with confidence. A sensation of well being like that is contagious; it was no longer necessary to contain myself, or to calculate my attitude, when I passed by the second lieutenant—I simply responded correctly. I did not violate the rules, but observed them and mastered them as if the whole thing was a game. I could sense a spark of sympathy, a profound complicity, at the instant our glances met.

Suddenly, to my left, an officer with epaulets on his shoulders and wide red stripes on his trousers appeared: a major from the General Staff who, obviously, was on his way, like every day, to the office. At that very moment, I took the curve with too much confidence, and when I had barely passed him I heard: “Hey, wait a minute!” And then, in the military jargon of Potsdam, with a sharp demanding tone that did not brook any opposition: “Why didn’t you salute the gentleman major general?”

He gave me an angry look, while he pointed at the sidewalk with his hand. It was indeed an unusual spectacle: a general on a bicycle. It was Linde-Suden, who was on his way to General Headquarters. I could still see him in half profile over the red flaps with a crown of oak leaves in gold.

Quick rejoinders are not ordinarily counted among my strong points. On this occasion, the ether undoubtedly inspired me: “I was concentrating all my attention on the gentleman major.”

His gaze pierced me with his severe but also languid face. The veins popping out of his neck, his eyes red, a slightly yellow complexion, ill-tempered, the kind of person who was suited for garrison service in the rearguard, an intelligent night shift worker, with an iron will.

It was obvious that he did not want to let me off the hook so easily, for, after having inspected me from head to toe, he asked me:

“Why did you leave without your weapons?”

In fact, I had forgotten them; but at least I was wearing my cap. Then I said, although it was not true, but it could have been true:

“I have a medical exemption!”

“Well, well.... And who is the doctor who is treating you?”

“The medical doctor captain Sternheim, major, sir.”

“Sternheim? Sternheim? It is obvious that he discharged you too soon. It is unlike him. It is true, though, that you still smell like a hospital.”

He looked me over again with manifest benevolence.

“Just like a wounded man, gold plated. Won’t they give you a medal for your loyal service in the trenches? Not at all. You should, perhaps, be a little more careful. But pay more attention; one slip could be fatal!”

“It will not happen again.”

His prophecy was accurate. Undoubtedly, the good fellow always felt like he was on duty and took advantage of his walks between the office and his home to enforce discipline and dish out warnings to the undisciplined. In principle, he was entirely correct, since every revolt begins with refusing to salute. But you cannot stop an avalanche.

## 131

Sometimes, our virtues are turned against us and our faults work in our favor. My disorientation had contributed to a narrow escape from this incident. Still floating on the wings of the ether, I then proceeded to the King George tavern. The owner had reserved a table for patients with nervous disorders, where almost all the customers had bandaged heads. Odd behavior did not attract particular attention there. Zobel had taken a bullet in the forehead and luckily it had lodged between the two cerebral lobes, without causing serious lesions. A stroke of good luck amidst misfortune, the first prize in a macabre lottery. Mundt, on the other hand, had lost part of his brain; he had to learn how to count and add, like a child. An old colonial soldier from Cameroon, with a small incision on his upper lip, was agitated at first by the symptoms of an extreme euphoria. We called him “Incredible”, because that was one of his favorite words. Between one digression and another, concerning how the Battle of the Marne would have turned out, if he had been in command instead of Hentsch, he interspersed some specific memories, especially concerning the time he spent in colonial service.

“When I heard the boy beat the drum, I grabbed my rifle and ran out of my tent in my pyjamas.”

Then he told us about how he found himself, in the moonlight, face to face with a gorilla, whose teeth glittered in all their whiteness. He shot at the animal without hearing any sound; it was like a dream.

“Then I heard someone whisper behind me: ‘cartridge, cartridge’; my girl from the Hausa tribe put a cartridge in my hand. She had followed me while the boys stayed behind out of fear.”

In his frozen state he was full of good spicy stories, like a shipwrecked sailor returning from the Tropics, and he constituted a kind of goldmine of data for the Sheikh, who also consulted him *in eroticis*. He often told us anecdotes about the Hausa girl, who came from the savannah and had a light complexion. Although he only provided for her as one would take care of a small dog that lies on the wicker mat at the foot of the bed, it was obvious that he had nonetheless cultivated a bond of affection with her.

In this circle, as I have said, I could hardly have attracted attention. On the other hand, I felt that my mind was more clear and lucid than usual, and I took the curves more abruptly, but I still did not feel the state that supervenes after a big breakfast. An intermission inserted into my everyday life; that night I went on the date I mentioned above.

## 132

The major, as I said, had predicted accurately: things would soon turn catastrophic. When in the midst of collapse things become even more catastrophic, the wave recedes and new norms are imposed. That is what happened here, too. It was not long before the major general went down with the ship, in circumstances that were hardly glorious. And at his side, the major. His offices were occupied by new commanders; thus, that of the major, for example, was assigned to Kleist, who also came to a catastrophic end, twenty-five years later, on the southern wing of the eastern front. I met him again in Vorosilovsk.

As for the meeting at Friedrichswall, Frederick said to me: “He rides a pale horse”,<sup>54</sup> and my adversary also sensed it immediately, despite the imprecision of his diagnosis. If I had “breakfasted copiously”, he would have known immediately. Such a thing can happen, for example, on your birthday. But that it should happen while out on a walk, right under his nose, while I followed in the footsteps of Maupassant, was something that was beyond his understanding.

Butterflies flutter in the thicket of phenomena, in whose shadow the panther lies dreaming.

## 133

So much for ether. Narcosis was followed by an interval of lucid happiness. Ecstatic intoxication had descended into a profound source; similar, but not identical, to the way it was described by Maupassant. I heard something like an orchestra that suddenly started to play, whose theme was taken up by a second orchestra and reflected like an echo that was modulated and developed in a series of variations. The echo was repeated resonantly and deeply. After a brief pause, the first orchestra played again. At first, they were far from each other and, then, they began to gradually come closer to each other, while the

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<sup>54</sup> This saying, much appreciated by Frederick II, refers to death’s horse, according to the book of *Revelations* (VI, 8): “And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him.”

instruments subsided. Shortly before losing consciousness, the image and its reflection became identical and merged in a low frequency buzz. I had heard the sound of the fabric. In the strings that no longer vibrated, the sound is extinguished. It switched off, it became too low for the human ear.

Here, then, is the Hegelian synthesis, harmonically reduced and accessible to any intelligence. A simplification that leads to successions of rhythmic nodes. In this way, it is obvious not *why* something is understood, but the need, the function of the act of comprehension in general.

Therefore, the thinker who does not work within this pre-established need will not be able to show the question that must be understood. If, in his system, the *harmonia mundi* does not vibrate, his words will only graze the recipient. This sound must have the eloquence of the word. This, in turn, explains the effect of some systems on masses whom these systems cannot reach intellectually. They not only influence with commentaries, but also immediately.

### 134

We are talking about afterthoughts: clarifications. Ether is a light and flammable substance; anyone who chooses it as a vehicle has no other remedy than to take precautions to avoid the fate of Phaeton. Like many stimulants, it acts on men like a spiritual fluid and on women like an aphrodisiac. In certain Belgian cellulose factories, where the air is thick with vapors of ether, female workers possessed by states of nymphomaniacal excitation had to be sent home. We have heard something similar about certain textile workers in glove factories, who use gasoline for cleaning the product. Close to the fabric, concepts and sentiments are interwoven in an ineffable unity. The thread is spun, colorless, almost immaterial.

Ether has often been praised as a remedy for alcoholism and has been used as a substitute for liquor. Thus, in Ireland, after 1840, when a determined preacher of abstinence, Father Matthew, prohibited peasants from drinking liquor.

The idea is plausible, for there is no doubt that ether has a “more spiritual” effect than alcohol. And a spiritual need lies at the root of all ecstatic intoxication, including the drunkenness of the beggar.

*You pour out for him hope, and youth, and life  
— And pride, the treasure of all beggary,  
Which makes us triumphant and equal to the gods!*<sup>55</sup>

The intention would therefore be more or less comparable to that of the teachers who propose to replace “potboilers” with “good books”; and it leads to equally unsatisfactory results. In both, the measure does not reside in the material, but in the human being who

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<sup>55</sup> The last verse of Baudelaire’s poem, “The Wine of the Solitary”, *op. cit.*

enjoys it. Otherwise, it would not even enter into anyone's head to drink ether, instead of inhaling it; in Memel alone thousands of liters were consumed in 1897. When a carriage passes by at a gallop, it leaves in its wake the odor of ether.

This presupposes a decline in quantity. At the same time, perceptions become more vulgar. Thus, an orthopedist who had become intoxicated with an ether-based liquid heard "disagreeable music of an organ grinder", that is, the melody of Maupassant in its cheaper version.

## 135

We may imagine that fumes and vapors liberate forces more subtle and spiritual than solid and liquid foods; this would naturally also be true of scents. They are subtle emanations of the material, often signs, above all in the night. Many of them only emerge when the sun sets. Since time immemorial, they have been considered to be vehicles that were suitable for the supreme approach and supervision. They are used in exorcisms, invocations, as incense for rituals, and in sacrifices.

To smell perfumes we need moist membranes; remnants of remote eras of marine life, but now, the sea of air has to replace the ocean, even for the most subtle forms of transport. Back then, the entire body was covered with hypersensitive membranes and was capable of receiving impressions of a kind that would now be unimaginable. Then, the kinds of messages transported by the breeze from flower to flower were, and are, the rule.

They are recollections of *a single* wave and *a single* sea.

## *Narcosis*

## 136

The war was lost. Although such retrospective judgments are pointless, it was a mistake for me to have remained in the army for a few more years. Werner von Fritsch, who visited me once in Hannover, also thought that the army was not the place for me. He said this to a comrade, after a conversation the three of us had about Rimbaud. I only found out about this twenty years later, after Fritsch had been killed in Poland. It is true that it hardly helped him to have risen, so easily, through the entire hierarchy to the highest level. What he said was more or less applicable to a whole generation. Back then, Fritsch was serving in the riding school; the epoch of horses and cavalymen, however, not to speak of knights, had already concluded. It is possible to save oneself from the burning cinders, but not from the mud and ashes, when Krakatoa erupts.

At the time, I had discovered Rimbaud and was fascinated by him. Even today, I consider him to be one of the fathers of modernity and I can imagine how meeting the adolescent poet made such an impression on Verlaine.



*Rimbaud,  
Tu mérites la prime place en ce mien livre.*

Fritsch firmly believed that this kind of literary enthusiasm was prejudicial to service in the military and therefore to one's career. He was right; passion is always a sign of something that must be done, but also of something that must be omitted. "Reader" is not a favorable qualification on one's service record.

We should also note the restlessness caused by devoting oneself day and night to a dozen things that have nothing in common with each other. If most of them are nevertheless successfully concluded, this can be explained, among other reasons, by the fact that, unlike my father, I was very faithful to my passion. I always returned to pick up the thread. "It is not loyalty, but affection", as Martin said once to a girlfriend.

This interruption and resumption of the threads is necessarily associated with a change in judgment. We approach the core. Something similar happened to me with ecstatic intoxication, which interested me first of all as a vital impulse, then as a spiritual impulse, and finally, as a catapult at the wall of time.

I can consider Maupassant to be my guide to initiation in the second degree. His influence brought me intellectually to the fabric itself. He praised ecstatic intoxication as a mediation of absolute knowledge: "It was as if I had eaten of the tree of knowledge". Soon, one no longer even recognizes oneself in the mirror.

The mirror is, of course, a touchstone; if we successfully project the ego into it, we will have achieved a significant release. Thus, after various brushes with death the mirror image becomes stronger.

## 137

My experiments with ether were infrequent; months would pass without applying myself to this study or resorting to it as a means of escape, when the real world was not enough or required some heat. All things considered, a raised temperature, in a sauna, for example, could bring about an analogous clarification of vision.

Experiments with narcotic substances necessarily had to be rare, for the simple reason that they could hardly be fitted into my busy daily schedule. Nor could I plan ahead for such experiments, since the desire to conduct them would arise unexpectedly. Therefore, a miserable outcome would have been predictable, and that is what happened, in fact, when the turn of chloroform came.

Chloroform is abused like ether and other similar substances, but it is more dangerous. Lewin tells us about some patients that he had himself treated for this addiction, and also about an apprentice who was found in a state of deep narcosis, with a handkerchief wrapped over his mouth, and could not be revived.

The evening was grey, and a cold drizzle was falling, when I began the experiment; the city was inhospitable. Before inhaling the drug, I set a reliable alarm clock, which was all the more indispensable to me insofar as I always came to feeling lousy, and, usually, walked until late at night or read or worked. Often, later, a certain restlessness would make me leave the house, as if I would otherwise miss a chance to have an adventure.

Then I closed the door. The ecstatic intoxication of the solitary man always displays features in common with the practice of magic; in both, precautions are taken to avoid surprises. This also applies to the act of procreation and suicide, which constitute respective experiences that harmonize with ecstatic intoxication in its deepest layer.

There is a hypersensitivity, and a hyposensitivity, to poisons; chloroform is no exception. It affected me like heavy artillery, like an axe blow that extinguishes consciousness. It was different with ether; then, the string of the bow had vibrated, not provoking unease, but sonorous waves.

There is probably also a homeopathy of dying, in the thicket of the forest glade; Hypnos illuminates the path with his twin brother, Thanatos.

## 138

The alarm clock must have been ringing for quite a while, when I jumped out of bed. My awakening was disordered, like that of a passenger who is dizzy after a stormy crossing. My pillow was stained with vomit.

It was a Monday morning; the worst time, according to an unwritten law, to call in sick. Fortunately, I did not have to teach class that day, as I usually did, but was scheduled to attend morning gymnastics. I therefore dragged myself to Waterloo Square and threaded my way through the detachments that were being drilled, absent, deaf to the words that were directed at me. Knote, in command of a company that would depart for Russia the next day, where Seeckt was secretly training airplane pilots, remembered that morning, even years later. It seemed to him that I had come directly from a night from which I still heard the echo of excess, as if I had drunk all the beer in the fountains of the garden of Tivoli. I let him think so; when it came right down to it, that explanation was more normal, more natural. There are cases where it pays to feign vices. That way, one still stays within the rules of the game.

Otherwise, the feeling of not having satisfied the demands of institutions always made me feel anxious. It is just on the border of the measureless where you recognize your value.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *An den Rändern des Unvermessenen*: that is, on the border of lands without topographical limits, without measure, therefore virgin or wild; lands that do not know a limit, measure or moderation. He already concluded his book, *Over the Line*, with the following words, directed at Heidegger: "Now we find ourselves in the immeasurable (*im Unvermessenen*). Here, safety is minimal, but there is more hope of obtaining good fruits.... But there is also the possibility of failure." And in *At the Wall of Time*, we read:

It soon becomes disturbing. How could coral resist the waves without its protective skeleton? In the long run, this made me a friend to the Prussians; their instinct for order, not their desire for war, has given them a bad reputation. And with regard to this point, I am a Bonapartist.

In any event, Stirner did not give a free pass for high rank. Of course, sovereignty is innate to the ego and his own. He can only affirm this, if he is ready to sacrifice something in exchange. Freedom has its price.

Besides the fact that deep narcosis is very dangerous and that I might have shared the fate of the apprentice, the ether experience described by Lewin left me with a disagreeable memory. It was, as I said, an abuse that was better concealed behind the appearance of normal excess. Excesses like that abounded, undoubtedly, in that era that was designated with a term that was already in common use, the “post-war” era. Despoiled nature had re-established its equilibrium.

The bad experience I had in a hotel in Halle must have taken place around that time. I will discuss it later, since I am not proceeding in the world of ecstatic intoxication according to historical method, but by degrees of approach. Experience and effect coincide only approximately here.

Anyway, I was led to engage in an unavoidable moral withdrawal, which necessarily entailed a conscientious spiritual housecleaning. The *topos* around the column of Waterloo, with the barracks, arsenals, mess halls, and military prisons, made me feel uneasy, as well as the adjacent neighborhood of Calabutz: old houses, with their landlords and tenants, shops and taverns, where instructors would toss back a glass now and then. Although, during that period of the inflation crisis, we paid with millions of marks, corporals were still known as “liquor drinkers”; and that because of the five cents by which the Prussians had increased their pay and which, at that time, was enough for a shot of liquor.

Compared to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this consumption was in decline. Moltke had already seen to it that canteens were filled with coffee, instead of liquor, as was previously the custom. When it was time to harvest the potatoes and turnips, the peasants still brought to the fields *Köhm*, a strong, yet watered down, alcoholic beverage that was nonetheless consumed in large quantities. It would therefore appear that certain forms of heavy labor require such supplements; thus, thanks to Rainer Brambach, to whom we owe some good verses, and who for a while had earned his living as a stonecutter at a granite quarry, I became aware of the fact that a day of work like that, with such a heavy hammer, was

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“The virgin jungle disappears.... The human being lives off of the jungle and consumes it, like everything measurable (*Vermessene*) feeds on the immeasurable (*Unvermessene*).” Ernst Jünger, *An der Zeitmauer*, in *Sämtliche Werke* 13, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, p. 554. On this question, see Enrique Ocaña, *Más allá del nihilismo* [Beyond Nihilism], University of Murcia, 1993, pp. 23-49 and 201-276.

only bearable with the help of vast quantities of strong red wine. In Cerdeña I saw something similar.

The liquor monopoly kills two birds with one stone: it increases both profits and productivity. Most likely, such monopolies were based on the fact that it costs more to renounce these agreeable things than it does to renounce necessities: salt, tobacco, and alcohol. As for the *connubium*, it is only valid if State and Church “have granted their permission”: “We’ll strew chopped straw before her door”.<sup>57</sup>

Liquor also serves as a sign within the social hierarchy. “Back off, my good man, you stink of liquor”. There were types who were always drunk and who played a role in popular jokes as comical figures: idlers, coachmen, porters, “old Swedes”; low level officers from Potsdam who had even served under the Great Elector of Brandenburg and who obviously had attained an incredible longevity, preserved thanks to alcohol.

Industrial society cannot allow this to continue, and when Hölderlin says, “Bacchus is the spirit of the community”, it is something that has less and less value for this society. Undoubtedly, it cannot renounce euphoria, but it must not allow this factor take refuge behind the individual’s right to control his consciousness, either. Stabilizing and harmonizing elements must be introduced, but only within the limits of the playing field, that is, they must not partake of the Dionysian quality. There must be no trespassing in zones of epiphany. The blood alcohol level establishes the limits.

This is where the work of the pharmacologists begins; the modern world, with its efficiency and its records, but also with its comforts and its whole atmosphere, is unthinkable without them. Furthermore, it is possible that tobacco will also be dealt a setback and that the era of the smoker, properly speaking, will someday come to an end.

Ecstatic intoxication as approach must be limited to certain places and certain times, to reservations outside the technological world.

## 140

From my window I could still observe figures from an already eclipsed era. Across the street, there was a store that sold military equipment, where business went from bad to worse and whose owner, Papa Lüdemann, also served alcoholic beverages. These people often went into the store for only a minute. Carters and guards also went there, who did not have much to do, but who knew all the regular customers. It did not take them long to disappear, along with their horses, and their the blue uniforms with the long tails and the sabers they dragged behind them.

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<sup>57</sup> A reference to the first book of *Faust*, scene XVII: “At the Well”, where Liseta, speaking with Margarita de Barbara, refers to the old custom of throwing straw on the threshold of the door of the houses of those families whose daughters had lost their virginity and had to be married right away.

In this world there is little movement and a lethargic contentment reigns, as is the case with carp and crayfish in lakes and ponds. Since Antiquity, the authors of comedies have found their best fishing grounds in such waters. There is also tragedy, and Büchner saw this quite well. It is most unfortunate that Grabbe, who since childhood “would not let go of the bottle”, would prefer to focus his interest on Hannibal and Napoleon instead of the criminal underworld with which he was so familiar. He wanted to become “a German Shakespeare”. This is already a handicap. It was not necessary for this to be a proclaimed goal. The pearl grows not only in the sea, but also in artificial nurseries, and around small grains of sand.

Although the neighborhood where I used to live was consumed by flames in one horrible night, I still often visit my old house in dreams: Mittelstrasse 7, ground floor. In Hannover I lived in many different houses; my nocturnal visits, however, are limited to that one residence and another one on the Krausenstrasse, where my grandmother spent the last few years of her life.

It cannot be merely the force of memory that causes us to return to such places. They must be realities of a much more dense substance; how else could I explain that I return continually to an apartment in the suburbs of Berlin, concerning which I only know that I wanted to rent an apartment that was already occupied? It is obvious that we also move about by day through an oneiric world, parallel to our everyday concerns, that lends itself to things of a different kind, almost imperceptible. If something important happens, it seems rather as if it arose from that stratum and realized itself.

I look around these desolate spaces; for many years, lower ranking officers from the nearby barracks stayed here. The furniture was seldom replaced; it was always cheap and impersonal, and was already over fifty years old.

Too many books: that is what almost everyone thought who ever came to visit me. I had installed a bookshelf, with iron brackets, over the sofa; one fine day it collapsed. Which did not at all surprise me when I came home. Hume’s *History of England* was too heavy; later I gave it to Valeriu Marcu. There is a monograph on the deaths of bibliophiles where this kind of accident, together with falls from ladders, plays a leading role. The expression, “end up crushed by books”, acquires a concrete meaning in this case. Even today I feel threatened when I look around my house.

I had to move out of that house; I no longer liked it. It was never particularly hard for me to walk up or down a few flights of stairs; certainly, one must take society seriously, but not too seriously. In the Foreign Legion, it did not take me long to get to know the mess hall and the brig; as for the *basse-pègre*, only in the punishment battalions and in French Guyana was there a minority of the most select.

The fact that I nonetheless made something of a career in the Prussian army was all the more curious if one takes into account that my record noted my desertion from the Foreign Legion. Once again, I benefited from the generous spirit of that army, for the Legionnaire, as I learned afterwards thanks to Benoit, was considered to be a suspicious

person and, as such, was subjected to close scrutiny. Much later, while on garrison duty with the security service during the occupation of Paris, I attended a conference convened by an official on the arrest and registration of suspicious elements; along with Spanish reds and Russian immigrants, he mentioned Legionnaires. Compared to the Jews and the Communists, the suspects that this flunky specialized in on the Avenue Foch were not big fish, but one thing is certain: anyone who enlisted in the Foreign Legion was considered to be capable of anything.

Nevertheless: it is rare for excesses to rain down from the sky. In their majority they are symptoms of discontent about a certain situation, with the advantage that the thing ends abruptly and does not allow for delay.

### ***White Nights***

**142**

Just as I was getting ready to move on from that intermediate category to the East I discovered a gap that had almost escaped my notice: cocaine. I am not so much interested in classifying drugs—something that I will leave to the pharmacists—as I am in depicting in their rough outlines those states that drugs provoke and which should be taken into account.

Cocaine calls to mind Bodo, a comrade from my conscription age-group whom I got to know after the First World War and for whom I felt a certain admiration. The type of person who made a good impression on us during our school years, and even during the 1920s, the kind of person who is dear to us, whom we meet everywhere that humans gather for work or for pleasure. He occupied a central place there: that good looking young man, with a good physique, with an alert intelligence, with whom everyone wanted to be friends. He was a good gymnast, dancer, fencer, horseman, and motorist, and even an eloquent speaker, always quick with a response. Without exaggeration, the world was his oyster; everything went his way. At the university he obtained the position of teaching assistant and in the military he was a junior officer. The comrades chose him as their spokesman. Born under a good star, it could only augur for him an ascent to a position of authority. Then, however, disappointments can arise that are comparable to those caused by the passage through adolescence. The model is something more light and subtle; I find it strange that it should have been encountered above all among aviators. In fact, all of them had a predisposition to that job, an elemental kinship with the symbols of the air. I am thinking of Udet, whom I heard say at breakfast that “you fly better with your ass than with your head”, which seemed convincing to me. That was when a flyer could still distinguish himself with his aerial acrobatics. His fate is typical; politics only contributed the circumstances.

During those years, there was something else that made an impression: one’s first literary conversation. This does not necessarily involve the world of books in the strict sense, but rather the encounter with the “reflective” man. His lot is isolation from the group, long hours spent walking with a friend, discussions that lasted long into the night. And even

when the conversation turned to the history of crime one would often look back on such conversations as the root of complicity. This is no less true of good influences: if, instead of carrying on with his monologue, Raskolnikov had opened the door to Razumikhin, the crime never would have taken place.

Both qualities were united in Bodo: he was enchanting both in society gatherings as well as in intimate conversation. A fortunate case that has been repeated in my life and which has accompanied me over the course of time, whose desert stretches, which have been getting increasingly longer, could not otherwise have been traversed without great suffering.

When I moved to Berlin, that is, already quite early, we lost touch and only occasionally heard news from each other. We met again for a second time, much later, at the “round table” of the Hotel Georges V, in Paris. To evoke him I have had to take out the file with his letters. It seems that the good fortune that he enjoyed never abandoned him over his entire life, not even during the worst moments, because almost no one in our epoch has managed to escape unscathed: it remained faithful to him, in his final journey.

## 143

Among the characters whose outlines I have just depicted, there was no lack of obstacles: one of them was gambling. It is true that here, too, generally, they have a lucky hand.

With the final dissolution of the world of the Estates System and its values after the First World War, here, too, there was, as in other domains, a transformation. On such a landscape, after a felling of trees, if something still survives, it does not take long for it to become absurd, strange or simply boring. This is what happened to the duel, fencing with sabers, the word of honor, hand-kissing, the old customs of courtesy and the knightly virtues. Perhaps here or there an Ekeby<sup>58</sup> survives. In such places the conditions for the game in its noble version are still fulfilled.

Naturally, the game of chance will never be extinguished; but its forms will change. They are adopting the rhythm and automatism of the world of labor. In a description of Las Vegas (Thomas Wolfe: *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, 1968), I find that place described as “the Versailles of America”: an extraordinarily apt comparison. As a link in the chain leading to Las Vegas we should cite Monte Carlo, which flourished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and with the end of that century lost its attractive power. Furthermore, *roulette*, compared to dice and card games, already represents a transition towards automatism.

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<sup>58</sup> See *Radiaciones II*, tr. Andrés Sánchez Pascual, Tusquets Editores (Andanzas 98/2), Barcelona, p. 531. Ekeby is the name of the castle where the major housed the knights in the saga of *Gösta Berling*, written by the Swedish author, Selma Lagerlöt.

A restriction is imposed that affects the relation between style and motif. The motif can attain a greater profundity and depend less on time than the collective spirit of an epoch and its style. Motifs are not only universal and recurrent (*leitmotifs*), but can sometimes be grasped in a particularly apt and valid way. Thus, the motif, "fortune and bad luck", in the form of roulette.

In the face of such a correct assertion, some motifs are concentrated in simple and eloquent models, as in this case in the wheel and the ball, in the red and black chips, in the odd and even numbers and in the zero that only benefits the house. The old idea of the wheel of fortune has been brought to its perfect formula.

Today Monte Carlo has been transformed into a kind of museum, and the casinos, conceived all over the world for the purpose of separating fools from their money, have become as superfluous as the national borders near which they are constructed. The game of chance has adopted other forms, it makes use of other means and founds industries and monopolies within the automated world.

## 145

In Hannover, gambling encountered propitious soil in various epochs. So it has been since olden times; in any case, ever since the horse was adopted and honored in Lower Saxony. Until the death of Widukind, in this region not only was the horse honored, but it was also worshipped. Woden originally had an equine form. Like many other creatures, the horse passed from totem status to heraldry: one of the transitions with which its final reduction begins. In the Kingdom of Hannover the horse still appeared on flags and postage stamps. The equestrian statue of the king Ernst August in front of the Hannover train station withstood not only the year 1866, but also the firestorm on the great night of the bombing.

Whenever I leave the station from its main gate, his statue offers me a kind of consolation. This must come from the steed, rather than the horseman; it is not a royalist sentiment, but a tribal one. Guelphs, like the dynasty of the Hohenzollern of the Mark of Brandenburg, are hardly native to these lands.

## 146

Even when the Kingdom became the Prussian State of Hannover, the horse still played an important role; the army preserved its cavalry school in the capital, which also survived in the Republic. This was not by chance; in the changes of history and governments, places preserve their own force. The fact that meanwhile the era of horsemen and horses had already become obsolete was a fact that could not have gone unnoticed at the time.

Horses and horsemen, however, were still capable of causing some aftereffects, in connection with the races in autumn. The passion for the horse and for gambling are closely related; they are united in the bets on horse racing that cannot be as ruinous as the pure game of chance because, on the one hand, they are limited to one result and, on the



other hand, they leave time for reflection. It is true that the races create an atmosphere that is generally favorable to gambling. This is also true with reference to our narrative; throughout that entire era, Bodo gambled with some comrades in small back rooms or at the Herrenhausen Castle, where a *bookmaker* [in English in the original] occasionally passed through with a roulette wheel and a baccarat pallet.

The gamblers never finished and hated any interruptions; Lord Sandwich became famous for his indefatigable sedentary behavior that did not even tolerate a pause for eating, but he made his servants serve him those slices of bread that, bearing his name, have since become indispensable.

One will understand perfectly that the nights were very brief, and that is why the rooms where they played were furnished with thick black curtains. These curtains were usually closed; simply because the game of chance is the object of persecution, but also because no noise, no outside presence, must disturb it. The air is thick; the gamblers also smoke endlessly. The light is dazzling, the service silent and suspicious.

These are places that one enters in a state of tension and, at the same time, with the feeling that one is under surveillance. It is likely that there are secret back rooms, hidden from sight, but even if there are not, the demon lies in wait.

I was only in Herrenhausen once and I did not stay long; the atmosphere was unpleasant.

## 147

Like all activity that requires concentration, gambling is also undermined by drink. The narcotic effect weakens attentiveness, and the stimulant effect makes one take the curves too fast: one lets one's guard down. On the other hand, the tension of the white nights leads to exhaustion; the gambler is forced to depart or to snort powder.

Attention directed towards a limited field must remain alert, without either excitatory acceleration or fantastic influences. The desirable state is, more or less, that of a hot air balloon that must be kept at the same altitude. Towards this end, chemistry offers excellent means, among which, to speak truly, it is hard to discern where stimulation becomes doping. An enhancement of performance can also be manifested as greater endurance. Undoubtedly, the resort to outside substances has to be made increasingly more often, since energy does not decline in a constant way, but following an abrupt curve. Suddenly, the balloon touches down, no matter how much was done to prevent it. The ascending force is exhausted.

Bodo and his friends, among them a young doctor, had discovered that small doses of cocaine were more effective than coffee and tobacco for staying awake. In addition, the effect still persists on the next day, until the end of the game. They would thus appear to be as fresh as roses; at most, one noticed the fact that their teeth were clenched and they were constantly sniffing. None of them became addicts. To the extent that I have been able to follow their careers, all of them attained high ranks in the military hierarchy. It

was harder for Bodo to quit smoking; he even departed *ad patres* with a cigarette in his hand.

## 148

Cocaine became fashionable during the First World War; Zurich, that two-faced Janus, was one of the heartlands from which its rule emanated. Serner's collection of novels, *Zum Blauen Affen* (At the Blue Monkey), provides an idea of the habitat in which the drug spread. It is also said that fighter pilots with "weak nerves" used it to instill themselves with courage. Which could not last very long.

In his classic work on poisons, Lewin classifies cocaine as a member of the "Euphorica", and tobacco under the category of "Excitantia". Such classifications possess, like those applied to mental illnesses, very blurry contours: they denote states and products that not only have very different repercussions on an individual level, but which also harbor divergent and even opposed powers. In this connection it is helpful to once again cite the saying of Paracelsus: *Solo dosis facit venenum*.

In this case, too, one can reverse the classification and include tobacco among the euphoric drugs and cocaine among the excitant drugs. In medicine it is used as an anesthetic and coagulating agent. Gamblers and pilots take it to stay awake and also as a kind of fuel, as a source of energy.

Cocaine does not exist in a pure state in nature. It is contained, along with other alkaloids, in the coca leaf, which in the Inca Empire was counted among the gifts of the gods. For this reason it also played a role in ceremonies. By chewing it, the Indians dispelled fatigue, hunger and pain; they therefore valued it for its energizing and euphoric power and also, as we would say today, as an "appetite suppressant". In fact, during their long excursions in the high mountains and while working on the plantations, it favored levels of production that Humboldt had already admired in his native guides in the Andes. Tschudi, who traveled through South America fifty years later, observed *in situ* Indians who chewed ten times the usual amount and who looked prematurely aged.<sup>59</sup>

Once again we touch upon the connection between ecstatic intoxication and time. And here we also note the curious fact that the Indians used the quid of cocaine, the "cocada", as a unit for measuring distance and time. In the mountains, time does not last as long as in the plains. It is also surprising that the Indian prefers to enjoy his first quid immediately after waking up, while he is still resting, rather than at work. Thus, this first *cocada*, like our morning cigarette, is consecrated to pure pleasure.

## 149

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<sup>59</sup> J. J. von Tschudi, a Swiss traveler who in 1840 published his impressions in a book entitled, *Peruanische Reiseskizzen während der Jahre 1838-42*. Jünger also seems to be familiar with Ernst Freiherr von Bibra, the author of a now-classic treatise on the topic, *Die Narkotischen Genußmittel und der Mensch*, Wilhelm Schmid, Nürnberg, 1885.

They “snort” cocaine while they are playing, and undoubtedly with moderation; perhaps the way one smokes a black Brazilian cigar or drinks a cup of *café moka*. Their journey is made at a galloping pace. Later, they resume their previous pace. It seems that the moderate consumption of coca can hardly be more harmful than the compulsive use of tobacco. At various times the Jesuits prohibited the use of this stimulant, above all for theological reasons: “Because the plant only seems to make you stronger by means of a deceit of the Evil One.” Then, the Indians planted the bush everywhere in the jungle thickets. Similarly, marijuana smokers now cultivate cannabis indoors or in the more remote parts of public parks.

Just as we distinguish the “drinker” from those who abide by the customs that regulate drinking, likewise the Indians distinguish the “*coquero*”—someone who consumes coca in inordinate amounts—from the person who peacefully chews his quid with a contemplative air. The *coquero* only knows one pace, the gallop. This rapidly leads to ruin.

With regard to artificially synthesized substances, this dangerous possibility becomes the rule: the dose is too strong. That is why I assumed that Bodo took the drug without abusing it, almost with a grain of salt, so to speak; which is all the more likely if one considers that, despite his great skill as a gambler, he did not bet with abandon and he usually won.

I felt little inclination to play, nor did I have gifts of the gambler. The “good hand” is among the gifts of nature and sometimes it is unmistakable; just as in the lottery there is a series of prizes that one is ridiculously unlikely to win.

I forgot to mention that, as I was leaving the gamblers’ conclave, I found myself face-to-face in the dark hallway with a high ranking cavalry officer, a successor of the “universal marshal” who had also been a major in Hannover. I was wearing a grey coat from 1912 that I had found in my closet. He saw my image in the mirror, turned and said: “If I ever see you here again, you’ll see what will happen”.

Even today I attempt in vain to decipher what this blunt insult meant; gamblers are touchy; they think that certain kinds of faces will bring them bad luck. It is also possible that he had pedagogical intentions, that he was admonishing me in that particularly dangerous den. Obviously, the kind of people with whom Bodo associated did not bother him. In that case, there would have been a big difference, not with respect to the game, but with respect to the drug. Immediately afterwards I headed straight for the border.

## 150

Bodo praised the lucidity that this substance confers. It was conducive to a fair and general view of things, and to clear decisions. He said I would have to try it; my pen would fly over the paper. He did not have to ask me twice; his friend, the doctor who was

also an adept, gave me a blue pillbox about the size of a five mark note, and a little spoon. One night I locked myself in my room with these accoutrements.

I had come from the gate of Saint Aegidius, by way of Friedrichswall; the first leaves were already falling. After making myself comfortable in a chair, I opened the box; it was filled with bright powder. The substance was white as snow, but intermixed with more elongated crystals, so that it formed a kind of cottony substance with a silky finish. I touched it with my finger; the sensation was not exactly pleasant. It produced a feeling of numbness, as if talc had been rubbed on my fingertips, and as if there was something unnatural in its cottony glossiness, like synthetic silk. Many products of organic chemistry have this sterile glossiness. They potentiate by way of reduction. There is nothing left of the green of the coca leaf, as I later saw it in the jungle. Similarly, morphine is pallid in comparison with the black weight of opium. There, the purple dream slumbers.

I tasted a small dose on my fingertip: a concentrated bitterness. Later, with the little spoon, I snorted a little in each nostril. The effect was almost instantaneous; my nose seemed to freeze and became numb, my breathing became deep and slow. An optimistic state of mind supervened upon me, as if the energies that I had previously dissipated in images, books and objects were now concentrated within me. Perception withdrew to the interior, with a smooth but sure motion, the way the horn of the snail retracts when something brushes against it or when a shadow falls across it. Its body becomes more solid, at the same time that it contracts. There are mollusoid forces that work not in the manner of the lever, like those of mammals and creatures with jointed appendages, but on the basis of an undifferentiated mass. It recalls the handshake of certain comrades who smoothly take hold of your hand, as if by enclosing it they wanted to absorb it, producing a pleasantly dangerous effect.

I picked up my pen and I tried to describe the leaves that I had seen on the cobblestones during my walk along Friedrichswall. They were still fresh before my eyes, with their metallic green, "over which the colored rust of autumn is superimposed". I thought that was a good phrase that I must have remembered from somewhere. A pair of impressions then followed, the first written in shaky characters, and the second in a series of illegible scrawls like the readout of a seismograph.

I soon gave up trying to write; it was unnecessary. I felt as if my capacity for representation had increased and as if, to the same degree that it intensified, I became incapable of all representation. A paradox exemplified everywhere in animate and inanimate nature. A dam must have an emergency spillway that corresponds to its capacity. If the amount of water held by the dam is too large, the floodgates will be opened to let out some of the water that cannot be drained through the power generation conduits. Similarly, a surge of electric power that is too great will trip the fuses, instead of letting the current follow its course through the circuit. My brain was then in a state similar to that of a dam with a water level that is too high or a tripped circuit breaker. I could no longer deliver energy in small quantities. With energy like that it would be easier to illuminate a city than a desk lamp.

Incapable of working: not due to a lack, but due to excess. Incapable of procreation: not due to impotence, but due to unbridled vitality. Here, the reef is nearby and the danger of shipwreck is great. It is necessary to grasp this contradiction, not only in the study of ecstatic intoxication, but also in the study of adolescence and the period of life that follows adolescence. This contradiction recurs in history and is typical of the changes in which Titanism is reiterated. It also heralds the dawn of the worker. The greatest risk resides in our own power.

## 151

I began to feel a more pronounced sense of cold. Not only had my nose gone numb, but so had my mouth and palate. At times I ground my teeth, like a horse chewing its feed. I went up to the mirror; my pupils had become big, like the eyes of a moth; darkened and dilated by the alkaloid. My face muscles were rigid, frozen, as happened to me once when I was on a voyage beyond the Arctic Circle. And, at the same time, my face was glowing.

The cold became more intense. If De Quincey imagined having lived in a coma for thousands of years, mummified, inside the pyramids, this was due to the consuming and desiccating effect of opium, such as may be studied in old Chinese men and as one may observe in Benoit and other Legionnaires. The brown paste mummifies. The “snow” freezes. It also entails a dilation of duration or at least of the consciousness of duration, for what is time but the consciousness of duration?

When the brain congeals and is transformed into a block of ice, it is just as impossible to form thoughts as it is to empty the North Pole with a bucket of water or to make it spray out of a fountain. The great central power plant goes into standby mode. In the absence of thoughts, the consciousness of spiritual presence and of power grows. The brain no longer thinks about this or that; it senses itself in its unlimited plenitude; the small change that once circulated has been deposited in subterranean vaults. Along with this, disillusion increases, as well as indifference towards the pretensions of the world. The block of ice becomes an ingot of gold, the human being turns into his own Harpagon. Now everything becomes possible for him; just as the miser could acquire everything if he did not prefer the sublime power of gold to spending it. Here, too, tragedy is concealed just below the surface of comedy.

This state of mind is not easy to understand; in any case, one cannot just trivialize it as a sterile variant of the imagination. The spirit believes itself to be omnipotent and considers that the effort that had previously absorbed its attention was not worth the trouble, nor was it enough. The settling of accounts in the world of the imagination and, when it comes right down to it, an instructive one: this is what can happen when the brain finally begins to exempt itself from service and uses its reserves for itself. A power that is not diminished, but stockpiled. Of course, this is only a transition, a trajectory.

## 152

I had seen those ghostly faces with dull, deadly nightshade eyes<sup>60</sup> in the cafes, not only on the Alexanderplatz, but also on the Kurfürstendamm. A repugnant spectacle, although in those days not a rare one. If there was one thing alien to the dynamic world, it was that total rigidity and lack of expression. It was not encountered among the opium or the cannabis smokers. Among them, their outward aspects ran the gamut of every kind of happiness and passion. With the cocaine addicts, however, ecstatic intoxication turned them into statues.

Everyone knows that “snow” encountered an especially warm welcome in the underworld. This cannot be the result of chance. In such environments, any difference between the vocation of the human being and his action is destructive. The human being sees his portrait corrupted by crime and vice, as Wilde has shown in *Dorian Gray*. Against this, artificial paradises are not enough. The spirit wants, at least for a few hours, to return to its unlimited plenitude, to its immaculate whiteness, even if it is a glacial whiteness.

The fact that the human being opposes his intelligible character to his empirical character cannot be interpreted from a moral perspective. He does not want to recognize himself in his virtue, but in his own individuality that has been bestowed upon him. When Raskolnikov wants to plumb the depths of his dreams, he does not take Christ as his model, but Napoleon. The streetwalker does not want to see herself as Mary, or even as Mary Magdalene, but as a courtesan, like Madame de Pompadour.

For a few hours, the spirit erects its statue. It cannot, however, put up any resistance at this altitude; it has to constantly inject itself with new forces. Ecstatic intoxication can approach closer to the absolute, but only in image: for an instant, we recognize what is possible. A glance is enough to pass through the door.

## 153

The faces of the night are like ghostly masks, with dark visages engraved in the material. My outward appearance was similar; I got up, now and then, to look at myself in the mirror. This was part of the experiment. Otherwise, I remained seated, my hands on the arms of the chair, while the hours passed by one after another.

In ancient China it was said that the kingdom was ruled by peace when the emperor was seated upon his throne in a just position. I understood the meaning of this rite later when I

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<sup>60</sup> *Nachtschatten* can mean either “a dark or nocturnal shadow”, or “deadly nightshade”, that is, a hallucinogenic plant of great psychoactive power, a member of the nightshade family—often used by witches—which is also known as *solanum nigrum* or the Moorish herb [in English it is also referred to as “Belladonna”—American translator’s note]. Later in this text, Jünger refers to *die Nachtschattengesichter*, literally “the faces of black shadow”. The association between *Lemures* or ghosts and deadly nightshade is rooted in the ancient use of the *Solanaceae* in the rites of witchcraft.

examined many temples of the Far East; a sublime repose emanated from the idols. Flow, illumination, and the impregnation of cosmic energies take place without effort. There is no cross, no Grönewald, no clock, no anxiety, no constant musings concerning the *perpetuum mobile*.

Reliable chronicles speak of Tibetan monks who spend the night, naked, nestled up against rock-studded walls of ice, and there they dry, one after another, soaking wet cloths, which they spread over their shoulders. This cannot be achieved by virtue of their own body heat, as motionless as they may be, but only by another thermal flow, that is: a heat that the cosmos instills directly into the *bios*. By way of a circuit, through “fuses” which protect us against short circuits, all of us feed on this radiation.

Facts of this kind, such as Huc observed in his travels in Mongolia, often shock us because they do not fit into the system of our dynamic world. But why do they also make us feel uneasy? If we were to be told that these monks were connected to a network of electrical current we would feel relieved. This current has existed since time immemorial, long before it became visible to us and then usable by way of a series of phenomena. It is one current among others, known and unknown, just as our world is one among others.

## 154

Anyway, I needed reinforcement, and I obtained it with the little spoon. The amount I took was only a pinch of powder, but its effect was immediate. Not only had my nose, face and cheeks become cold and numb, but my entire organism was frozen, as if I was immersed in liquid oxygen; a plant with filamentary roots and feathered branches, crystallized even at the cellular level.

A flow of a pure and clear mass welled up so quickly, that I seemed to be as motionless as a mirror. Then, creases and blemishes appeared on its surface; phenomena that are also manifested in soap bubbles just before they burst. It was not a pleasant sensation, since it introduced time into my ecstatic contemplation. When we perceive velocity and gravity, the fall has already begun.

My state of mind began to deteriorate; I resorted more frequently to the little spoon. Although the nights were getting longer, the light filtered through the curtain. My body felt like a racehorse that is always getting noticeably weaker, no matter how frequently and insistently we apply the spur. At this threshold the drug ceased to be effective, even though I increased the dose to absurd levels. All that remained was the toxic effect. It makes you lethargic, it paralyzes, it destroys, it allows the demons to enter unopposed. These are the twilight states of mind, in which Dmitri Karamazov heard the sleigh-bells ringing. It might also be the ambulance siren.

## 155

Cocaine has in common with morphine and chloroform the property of killing pain. It is distinguished from them by the fact that it does not quell, but maintains attentiveness, and even increases it.

“Snow”, in the case where it encounters an intact organism, transports the spirit to a state of attentive frigidity and abandons it, by suppressing the perception of the body, to the solitary pleasure of the self. It can blossom like a water lily in a pond at night, bathed in the rays of the moon.

With addiction, serious disturbances supervene, such as, for example, hallucinations involving horrible insects that swarm on and under one’s skin. You cannot get rid of them, even if you try to kill them with knives and scissors. If they were real, the threat would be easier to deal with.

Serious abuse harbors other dangers; the paralysis of the muscles of the breathing apparatus, for example. This danger looms in the hours before dawn when, to maintain your high, you increase the dose more and more. It is as if a gambler were to double his bet, but without hope. After the cannons, you have to throw the anchor overboard, too. The ship, however, sinks quickly, the water is already up to your neck that almost does not feel the cold. Icebergs within and without: the brain, the tip of the iceberg, is all that is visible. Your ears perceive the rhythm of the ship’s orchestra; it interprets the melody of life.

## 156

Our nights are too short for such long journeys. Dawn is breaking; the bugle call has sounded. One can hear the measured steps of the changing of the guards outside; mounted troopers are also passing by; they want to give their horses some exercise while the square is still deserted. It was Sunday, and it was still some time before church services. Attendance was voluntary, and for the lower ranking officers the service was reduced to leading the detachments to the church and then back again. The interim was spent in one of the nearby taverns. Even the conversations held in these taverns were marked by that melancholy aura of Puritanical Sundays.

The house also began to come to life; the regiment’s tailor, like most of the veteran soldiers, was an early bird, and the men under his command imitated his example. Before the war, he had already sewn numbers on many jackets, starting before breakfast, piece by piece, at thirty cents each. On the other side of the building, the lights were also already turned on. That is where Lieutenant Von Einem lived, who was by no means overpaid; he transcribed addresses, for ten marks a thousand.

When the dawn breaks after a night like that, we feel threatened by an atmosphere of being on trial. The little sounds that usually accompany the beginning of the day, the light and tentative movements in rooms and floors, on stairs and in hallways, acquire an associated moral tone, they become accusers. We want to deny them, extinguish them. Nonetheless, they become increasingly louder, like an orchestra, which, after an overture,



soft as a whisper, floods space, and not just space. At this moment, no resistance is of any help.

Then we begin to become aware of the theft we have perpetrated against society by engaging in such excess. "I exceed": I went too far, I thus removed myself from my own proper boundaries as well as from those of society. *Excessus* is excess. As a result, sooner or later, one runs the risk of *exclusio*, exclusion.

The solitary nature of the pleasure is added as an aggravating circumstance. It becomes an all the more urgent necessity the more adversely the drug could affect one's reputation. The student who returns to his room just before dawn scandalously drunk gets a good scolding from his landlady. He has transgressed against order; the neighbors are partly indignant, partly amused. The circumstances are different when the same landlady, upon entering his room with the breakfast tray at the usual hour, finds the student sitting in the chair, with an ashen face, absently staring off into space. This man is weird.

For the student, however, it is no less disturbing to see the landlady, who comes into the room fresh and in a good mood after a night of restful sleep. His state is the kind that we find so repulsive that we are shocked. He shows some predilection for crime, but only crime of the highest rank, the kind that is committed in solitude. Nietzsche must have had this in mind in his passages devoted to the question of evil. The petty criminal, the small-time crook, the accomplice and the thug are economically dependent on society and psychologically dependent on the social relations between human beings. Getting intoxicated in solitude is a replacement for action, a substitute.

## 157

On a morning like that, however, there are other, worse enemies than society, composed of those whose day begins with their morning routine. This was and still is dangerous, however careful we are not to make noise. At that moment, the landlady comes down the stairs and Papa Lüdemann raises the blinds. Two floors above, Haarmann sets to work with his axe.<sup>61</sup>

They are marginal phenomena, background noise, as Kubin says. They accompany the farewell bid to the silent and solemn night. Before, we were safe, as if snuggled in a deep bosom; now the light of day announces its arrival with its pitiless shafts. Underground there is more life, more subtle and delicate, than under the light of day. All those seeds, pupae, rootlets, mycelia, slugs, and nematodes only become visible if a shovel brings them to light, which quickly destroys them. However, the root that nourishes the foliage, the myth that nourishes history, the poet that nourishes the thinker, the dream that nourishes our works and our days, lives on.

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<sup>61</sup> Haarmann, the Vampire of Hannover, who lured boys to his house, sodomized them, strangled them and chopped them into pieces.

“The night is deep, and deeper than day can comprehend.”<sup>62</sup> “More light”;<sup>63</sup> this also has a hermetic version: darkness. Whoever the woman with whom we sleep may be, her bosom awakens our desire to return to the Mother. It is *her* altar, not Aphrodite’s, at which we offer the sacrifice. Aphrodite only provides the form, as the gods in general provide the form. Some take her too seriously; others underestimate her. She is the object of every dispute worthy of the name.

## 158

A dwelling, especially a dormitory, must always preserve an aspect of the nest or the cave; it has to be a refuge. The German word *Bau* [mine, den, cave, hideout, habitation] has a subterranean character; it evokes galleries and chambers, like those dug by animals, above all the stronghold of the master fox, Malepartus. Even as a child I especially liked nests that were also covered on top, like those of the shrew, the woodpecker and the weaver bird. It must be pointed out, however, that I never liked glass buildings, such as the ones that I contemplated, with more revulsion than admiration, in New York. Naturally, I make an exception for laboratories and observatories, but glass facades are not favorable for limited symbioses, such as are represented in offices and schools. In a glass hospital we can be repaired, but not healed.

I have always felt a predilection for black curtains; the light, however, filters through them with increasingly greater intensity. With pale colors, it clearly demarcates the carpets, books and furniture, and absorbs their reality.

I was seated on the armchair; the little blue box lay on the table. Its contents had hardly diminished; I must have consumed a gram. It is true that, in the opinion of the experts, this was an excessive dose for beginners. If I wanted to maintain my high, I had to raise myself up all at once, again, with a much higher dose. I thought about it: the door was locked; the cleaning lady arrived late on Sundays. For such undertakings it should be possible to conceal oneself in the most inaccessible material, to occupy chambers hewn out of the solid rock, towards which an endless stairwell descends.

A higher dose entails a higher risk. It is said that in dangerous situations, we split into two persons, one of whom observes the other. In war or in a fire this can get us out of a tight spot. It shows us this or that way out; we think of it as instinct. There is nothing to

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<sup>62</sup> A slightly modified quotation from Nietzsche, whose Zarathustra—in “The Sleepwalker’s Song”—says “world” instead of “night”: “... the world is deep, and deeper than day can comprehend”. As Andrés Sánchez Pascual points out, Nietzsche had also written on his personal copy the title, “The Drunken Song”, next to the heading, “The Sleepwalker’s Song”. It is thus not by chance that Jünger paraphrases this famous song, where he speaks of “deep midnight”, for it is by this means that Nietzsche called attention to the relation between ecstatic intoxication, pain and pleasure.

<sup>63</sup> “*Mehr Licht*”. According to Chancellor Friedrich von Müller, these were the last words spoken by Goethe on his deathbed, on March 22, 1832: “Do open the shutter of the bedroom so that more light may enter.”

object to in that: instinct is a word like any other. Sometimes, this observer who can so quickly act as an accelerator, or as a brake, also assumes the form of the involuntary logical transgression. And that was also the case here.

That room never had running water; the landlady would come and conduct a rudimentary cleaning of the room, while the tenant left to go to the bathroom. She made the bed and refilled the water pitcher. The basin containing the used water was emptied in the bucket, along with the ashtray and, in accordance with a time honored tradition, the urinal.

If I had to make the poison disappear somewhere, it was there. The brake ordered me to get up and empty the little blue box in the bucket. The instructions were very detailed, of an almost Levitical subtlety. I had to rinse out the box and its lid to dissolve even the smallest trace that could have stuck to a fingertip. "*Un soupçon*", as they say when pouring wine.

## 159

The captain had intervened; he is always onboard, but only rarely does he make an appearance on deck. It sometimes happens, however, that we immediately perceive the change. It was once believed that in individual situations of emergency it was not necessary to mobilize great powers; one counted on mediators, effective protectors, and guardian saints. It is not absurd that these cults were so very numerous, involving veritable armies of intercessors, for each individual felt the need for a particular helper, one that was specially devoted to him. To this day, rhetorical flourishes like "my guardian angel" are still commonly used.

The place of the individual in the cosmos, even among millions of human beings, is unrepeatable, like the network of the lines on one's palm. From this point of view, at least, the astrologers know more than anyone else.

In every situation there is a way out for every individual, as long as he knows the signs. To drive an automobile you have to be able to distinguish between red lights and green lights, and to make an emergency phone call you need to know the numbers on the telephone dial. Considered acoustically, each individual possesses an alarm signal that overcomes all resistance, but he must know the word. "Sesame", and the cavern opens.

## 160

I do not recall if they served me breakfast in my room on the Mittelstrasse. This lapse in my memory seems odd, insofar as I lived there for a whole year. I still recall apparently insignificant details, however, that, like the blue box, seem to be right in front of me on the table. It is evident that things associated with everyday life harbor influences that can only be weighed in memory.

That morning, anyway, I was not served coffee. Something that probably would not have been very normal in the times of my predecessors, among whom old Hindenburg was

certainly also included, who had lived in these two buildings, after 1866, when he was a second lieutenant in the Third Guards Regiment.

I changed my clothes and rumpled the blankets and sheets on the bed to give the impression that it had been used. This is an old trick of night birds. Then I went out to take a bath; not in the fancy facilities on the Goseriede, but at a modest establishment that had opened in the neighborhood. I brought a thermometer with me into the stall, for I had to be careful; my skin had yet to recover its sensitivity. The hot water felt good after the cold that had pierced me to the marrow. It restored my thermal equilibrium.

Apart from that, I did not feel tired in the least. To the contrary; I felt more clear-headed than usual. I was walking toward the old part of the city to have breakfast. I certainly did not have an appetite, but I fancied some tea and I ordered two cups. At this time of the morning, one breathed an air of great tranquility in the café, which surfaced in the center of the city like an island. With its big glass windows and display cases it reminded me of an aquarium. That is the way I always saw it, even when I was five years old, from above, in my father's laboratory, which had a view of the other side of the café. At that time an automobile still made a big impression.

The old men were absorbed in their newspapers. The editor, Stegemann, was sitting at a table with Schenzinger, a doctor and writer like Benn, along with the painter, Vierthaler. Some travelers came in from the train station to have a drink, and there were also some young people of independent means who were wilting with boredom and who stood out because of their sober elegance.

The city was still just a large village. Through the revolving doors came some of my comrades from high school, comrades from times of war and peace, and acquaintances of my father, such as the lawyer Edelstein, whom Löns, I think, has depicted in one of his novels.

We greeted each other or even exchanged a few words at the table. There are states of mind when we use whoever is sitting in front of us as a mirror, to discover if we are attracting attention. Sick people, especially people who are mentally ill, and addicts scrutinize themselves in this way. Thus, I, too, was afraid that they would read the signs of my excesses in my face; it was evident, however, that there was no reason for alarm.

Then Eggers arrived, an art dealer and also one of the eccentric characters of Hannover, with his broad-brimmed hat and his close-cut grey beard; an octogenarian, but still vigorous. His big display window was across the street, at the best location in town; Schwitters and other painters were very eager to have their works displayed there. But they did not enjoy any favor in his eyes: "In my house there is no room for rubbish."

The old man did not pay any attention to Stegemann, who had just published *Anna Blume* under his "Silver Horses" imprint, but he sat at my table to complain a little about him and his clique. At that moment I had very different things on my mind. Then Zenker joined us, who possessed a policeman's instinct for sniffing out mysteries. When

someone came from the Eilenriede<sup>64</sup> and found himself downtown, he said: “Have you taken a walk in the forest?” He must have had a peculiar sense of smell for such activities; it was, at the same time, presumptuousness, and a certain kind of meddling, by means of which he had the other person half in his power. He was also amusing, besides; twenty years later, however, he became disturbing. When someone returned from a vacation after three weeks, Zenker was capable of claiming: “To speak the truth, your uncle had a good bottle of Burgundy in the wine cellar.”

He had an extraordinarily sensitive nose for anything suspicious. He could tell at first glance whether a young girl “took money”. He sympathized with the streetwalkers, although this was only true as long as they stayed on their corners; he knew them by name. If, however, in the break between two customers, some newcomer tried to come into the shop to warm up with a cup of coffee, Zenker would wink at Fritz, a decrepit old factotum, who shuffled around from room to room in his greatcoat, with an asthmatic dignity, and kept an eye on the staff. Then Zenker said, “Fritz, a whore”, turning his gaze towards his victim. He did not exactly say this in a whisper; some of the customers heard it. Fritz then went to the table of the undesirable customer and left a note on her table: “You are requested to discreetly leave this establishment”. The other customers noted these proceedings with that sense of comfort that degradation arouses in those who are not affected. They were pleased with Zenker’s efficiency, just as, long ago, Martial was delighted with the staff who cleaned the luxury box seats of the Patricians at the circus.

## 161

I could rest assured: if I looked odd or even just drowsy, Zenker would certainly have noted it and I would not have been spared his comments.

I was worried, however, that the waterfall could not have inundated my brain for a whole autumn night without leaving any traces. Undoubtedly, the alternative between movement and rigidity was still unresolved. There are vines and trees composed of ice on the edges of glaciers and in ice caves.

On that occasion, ecstatic intoxication had not granted me either images or dreams, but only that abstract narcissism of the spirit, the nocturnal review of its immense but anonymous power. It had to cost me a vast expenditure of energy; I only became aware of this the following night, when I fell into a very deep sleep.

## 162

The experiment did not tempt me to repeat it. If it was a waterfall, it lacked the rainbow that, even in Iceland, gleams over the cascades where the salmon swim upstream.

In the system of Linnaeus the coca bush is included in the genus *Erythroxylum*, with the Brown Plum and Catuaba. In its external appearance it resembles our blackthorn, while

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<sup>64</sup> A large, forested urban park in Hannover, Germany [American translator’s note].

the fruit looks like a wild cherry. Among the alkaloids that we owe to Central and South America, cocaine is distinguished by its notable lack of color. If we subtract the sense of well being from the effects that coffee, tea and tobacco have on us, and if, on the other hand, we consider solely the increase of the stimulating force, to the point where it hobbles the spirit more than it liberates it, we come close to the peculiar combination of wakefulness and lethargy from which medicine has derived such great advantage.

For we must recall that here the West finds itself, by way of a detour, face to face with an augmentation of power by way of extraction. Where coca leaves are consumed in moderation, the harm cannot be more serious than that caused by tobacco. It becomes ruinous for the *coquero*, for the addict who chews approximately three times the normal dose. This is also more or less the case with the effects of nicotine; if we agree that this applies to a dose of twenty cigarettes *pro die*.

In both instances the improvement of one's state of mind or the intensification of the yield from labor can compensate for moderate harm. Being around a smoker during his periods of abstinence is not pleasant. Anyway, one does not live just to get old; old age is an addendum, and often not even a pleasant one, to existence.

White people do not get much pleasure from chewing coca; Indian women do not chew it, or only do so in secret. The men begin at a very tender age; sometimes the father will give a child a small piece from the quid he is chewing, similar to the way we will let children have a sip from our glass of wine. Seagulls and pelicans feed their chicks from their own gullets. From a spiritual point of view, this constitutes a feature of instruction among men, a paternal initiation.

## 163

Initiation. The fact that plants dispense something more than food, something more even than pleasure and healing, forms part of the pre-logical experience. Their veneration is more anonymous than that directed toward animals; rather than representations of the gods they are their presuppositions. They can be found everywhere—even in the New Testament—not only in the references to bread and olive oil, but also to lilies, the mustard seed, and the fig tree. When we are walking in a forest, we are overflowing with expectation; everything changes when the ram, the eagle or the snake appears. Paradise is the original garden; photosynthesis is the direct absorption of light.

On the *Altiplano* of the New World the coca bush is also the object of worship. Its leaves are offered as a sacrifice and they are chewed during religious ceremonies. The lesser gods are represented with distended cheeks; they, too, enjoy the magical leaves. The fact that the gods are offered plants, the way Pallas Athena was offered olives, is a reversal of their true attributes. It would seem more appropriate for them to sprout from the lotus, like Brahma, or that they should sail among their flowers like Lakshmi, the goddess of abundance.

When we study these phenomena today, we are on the one hand interested in their chemistry and on the other hand in their psychological effects. The substances whose microscopic structures were not understood until recently and whose active principles had been attributed to the “virtues” of the plants, do not act merely on our cells, but incorporate themselves into our cells in new combinations. They form chains and rings of a complexity that the body is not capable of producing on its own. The same is true of perception. It is made fertile with images that, if the plants did not give them to us, no thought and no act of imagination would be able to create them.

From our perspective, chemistry is a mode of “transition”, and the psyche is an organ that is sensitive to “that which supervenes”.

## 164

Just as Western medicine has separated from the juice of opium the eidetic effect in order to isolate the hypnotic effect, so too has it likewise extracted from the coca leaf the flow of euphoria that appeared to the Indians to be a gift of the gods. The narcotic effect has been isolated, a kind of congealment. In this neutral cold there is no longer any pain or pleasure.

Drugs also follow fashions; they maintain substantial correspondences with spiritual transformations that, perhaps, only leave minor traces in the history of style, but which nonetheless have an impact. In the years after the First World War, people “took cocaine”. They took “snow” in small quantities to stay awake or to improve their concentration like Bodo. In this respect, industry has since then developed more effective and less harmful remedies, such as the kinds that were used during the Second World War and then later on a mass scale. The harm that an Indian suffers over the course of ten years of constant chewing of coca leaves could be compared more or less to the harm inflicted by *Saridon*. Yellow pills: they are supposed to level out, above all, the ups and downs of one’s state of mind during the performance of subtle manual labor, and support concentration. A remedy that “attacks the kidneys”.

Even when its danger becomes acute, snow neutralizes. To the extent that the awareness of spiritual arrogance increases, impotence also grows. The ecstatic intoxication associated with snow not only produces bodily rigidity, but also congeals thought and its mobility. Naturally, this fortifies the consciousness of spiritual power, the haughty disdain for the troops. The general of the army still has all his reserves; Benedek, still euphoric, at Königgrätz: “Are we going to join the battle?”

As I have said, it is not the privilege of an intellectual prominence. It is rather a purely speculative feeling in which will and representation are recognized, without producing any visible difference. The individual ego is firmly established on the arms of the throne, Each person thus becomes a “Lucullus who eats at the house of Lucullus”. It is just that for Lucullus, this is his daily bread.

## 165

The Western Man who lands on the Moon encounters the confirmation of his own reality. He had known for a long time, thanks to his instruments, that he would not have to meet with any surprises, like the kind of surprises that exotic animals, abandoned cities or even native moon people might have offered. If there are previously unknown species on the Moon, he will not be capable of perceiving them.

Of a totally different nature was the landing of the *conquistadores* in the New World, that great adventure that gave rise to the modern era. Prescott has approached it as a historian; Stucken, in his trilogy, *The White Gods*, from the perspective of magic. His way of looking at the topic had been formed by his study of the ancient cultures of Egypt and Assyria, just as, along more general lines, one may observe that today the archeologists see more than the pure historians. Our times have witnessed, at least in this field, a certain qualitative leap.

While the voyage to the Moon was planned in advance from an optical and electronic perspective, the adaptation to the New World took time. This adaptation took the form essentially of a system of Christianization, technical adaptation and exploitation that was perfectly implemented right down to the smallest details. It was always more favorable for the natives when they faced Southern Europeans rather than Northern Europeans.

In the sense of the word, ambivalence, which we have already mentioned several times, the physiological effect and the magical-eidetic effect of the coca leaf underwent a schism. The natives, who enjoyed it as a sacred gift and as a divine food, that is, in a eucharistic way, were unaware of this distinction. It was established by the Christian *conquistadores*. At the Second Council of Lima the consumption of coca was prohibited and declared to be a sign of superstition and idolatry, just as eating horseflesh was anathematized under the reign of Charlemagne.

This prohibition threatened, in effect, to decrease the profits of the owners of plantations and mines that paid part of the Indians' wages in coca leaves. Apart from the fact that it was inexpensive, the advantage of this arrangement consisted in the fact that it increased productivity while also suppressing hunger. Entire tribes and remote villages would be exterminated in this way. Such forms of wages still existed a hundred years ago in the opium refineries of Singapore (*Viaje de la Fragata Novara alrededor del mundo*).

In these cases, the conflict ended in the classic way: both the cultivation as well as the marketing of the coca bush was declared a State monopoly. The exchanges between the Old and the New Worlds have not concluded, however, and we might still have some surprises in store for us in the encounter between the two worlds that takes place far below the level of the economic structure.

## **The East**

### ***Opium***



## 166

Weakness has zones of light and shadow; we become sensitive to good or evil. When we are weak, men and beasts, germs and illnesses, and also temptations, fall upon us. Weakness is the prerequisite of addiction, and a disease is often its trigger. When addiction is treated as an illness, treatments are not applied to the root of the disease itself but to its symptoms; this explains the high rate of recidivism. In the Salvation Army they know more about this than they do in the sanitariums. Many individuals never free themselves from addiction, as from crime, except with their deaths.

## 167

I asked myself why I felt weaker and more vulnerable after the defeat of the First World War than after the loss of the Second World War, even though the latter was an even greater catastrophe. It was probably the case that in the former, deeper layers were affected, especially by the reverberations of the Russian Revolution. Things of this kind are sensed not so much in events as in the form of atmospheric changes, as Alexander von Humboldt described them in his studies on the equinoctial earthquakes. The air becomes stifling before the foundations of the cities tremble and churches and palaces fall into ruin.

After the First World War, something new supervened, symptoms appeared that got worse or better but never completely subsided. Part of this picture was a sense of claustrophobia, or suffocation, that was manifested as either the reaction of the criminal, or as that of the cornered beast, or also that of the peasant who thinks he has been cheated by clever lawyers. For me, Stalingrad was a confirmation of this. In this way, the precipitate is deposited in a cloudy solution.

Then came the nocturnal verification of the Cherusci, passing through the Franks, the Saxons and the Swabians, up to the present, with details in the Peasant Wars, the Reformation, the Paulist church, Wilhelmism, with its pros and cons, like a game in which the movements of history are repeated. Fragments of conversations around the table: the disputes between Bergmann and Mackenzie about Frederick III's cancer of the larynx. Wilhelm II would have liked to meet Loubet during his first Mediterranean cruise. But to tolerate the singing of the *Marseillaise* as part of the reception ceremony onboard a German warship "was against his principles". He would, however, have tolerated a rendition of the military marching song, *Sambre et Meuse*. Barrès: if anyone could have kept Germany isolated, it would have been the emperor himself. Only gradually are people beginning to recognize that Barrès and Wilhelm were very much alike.

What motivated the peasants, the dukes, the kings and the queens? In the Teutoberger Forest we were on the side of Arminius; at Berezina, we were with Marshal Ney. This can be traced back to the deepest layer of the fabric of Celto-Germanic motifs, reinforced with Roman cross-stitching. Where does that intense feeling of déjà vu come from, when

we descend into the Etruscan burial chambers, or the sense of déjà vu we experience when we walk along the walls of Celtic fortresses at night? The people are increasingly less visible under the fabric, that is becoming ever more dense, of parties, interests and technical representation.

I ask myself again if this feeling is necessarily connected with a passion so strong that it is principally expressed in the form of pain. At least it had to be stripped of the ephemeral. The understanding says: Why does the disappearance of the stork from our countryside grieve me more than the disappearance of the dinosaur, whose extinction suggests transitions of a completely different order? Why is the fate of the empire of Bismarck more unbearable to me than the fall of the Hohenstaufen, or the partition of the Carolingian empire, events that were much more calamitous? The understanding replies that the temporal proximity and our personal involvement in the events distorts their dimensions like an optical illusion, and advises: you will have to counteract this illusion by attaining a spiritual distance, for example, by way of a philosophical and artistic supersession of such things. Such a course of action, however, would not even be effective against a toothache. It is necessary to pay tribute to time. Furthermore, there are still some isolated individuals among us who suffer profoundly and incurably from the assassination of Conrad.

We shall make no headway by way of discussions in which some of the disputants have toothaches and the others have false teeth. They are endless polemics. Then along comes a third position that, to almost everyone's surprise, creates a *tabula rasa*.

Personally, I was not in the best shape, either. That rifle shot in my chest left me in a state of weakness, which then affected a whole series of organs in succession; I even suffered some relapses in Sicily in 1929.

The sense of suffocation was no less visible in the economic domain; money had certainly not diminished, but had multiplied in a disturbing way. My father was the first to see it coming; he had a good nose for financial affairs. He became aware, before we did, insofar as he was more bound to the place and to the house, of the impossibility of continuing to live in the country. He was not prone to sentimental effusions, which were so contrary to his puritanical education; he did not accept too high a temperature. He rather tolerated a cynical attitude. One morning he came to breakfast in a good mood, as always, and brandished in his hand a wad of newly-issued fifty mark banknotes.

“Now is a good time to commit suicide. ‘He was not able to bear living after the misfortunes of the fatherland’, it will say afterwards in the obituaries.”

He nonetheless found a good emergency solution: in situations of that kind the most important thing is, as in a fire in a theater, to assess the situation before you lose your head. So, too, after the Napoleonic wars one had to live modestly, but things were more stable then, because the national wealth was still overwhelmingly based on the land. Above all, peoples' jobs were less abstract. Inflation was possible, but could not cause large-scale damage. Now ruination strikes down precisely the small patrimonies that have

been accumulating for three or four generations. Such small concentrations of capital are much more important, in the overall picture, than the great fortunes, which instead contribute to leveling and create resentment, even when, thanks to them, a university is founded.

For most people, the library, the music hall, the trip to Italy, the ski resort, the family doctor and tutor, were already privileges of the past. Families had always maintained one or another scion who was devoted to hardly lucrative professions. They were survivals of the Patriciate, which still persisted for a long time in favorable places like Basle, since the days of Erasmus.

## 169

The transformations of social status that were heralded by these developments did not bother me too much; after my baptism of fire, they were almost a bagatelle and only disturbed me due to the anxiety of our father, who crept around the house like someone who no longer feels at home, and who pondered over new forms of existence like a silkworm that is beginning to spin. The children become surly when their father no longer feels in harmony.

It was during this period that I struck up a friendship with opium. Our relations must have lasted for a few months; anyway, it helped me get through a grey winter. Its effect was beneficial for my spirit, although prejudicial to my physical health. Above all, I lost my appetite. This is an effect of almost all drugs, and the words of Mephistopheles, "With unmixed food thy body nourish", constitute more realistic advice that is incompatible with the spirit world.

I recall, once again, the atmosphere of those nights, when every two years, and almost always adventitiously, I tried one of those cough syrups that contain derivatives of opium. In Benicasin, for instance: a Spanish pharmacist gave me a cough remedy that would have cured a whole family.

This memory is specific and is not accessible in any other way; it is more or less as if in the great house of the universe there is a door to a chamber that only a key cut in accordance with a certain pattern can open. From a chemical, magical or erotic point of view, it is the formula that suddenly opens the complicated lock, the "Open, Sesame". Two juices intermingle, that of the brain and that of the fruit of the poppy.

## 170

The *atmosphere* returned, and therefore the handle, the act of opening, but not the habitation, with its paintings and its furniture. I have always asked myself about the existence of a New World, but not the kind of New World that is discovered in voyages like those undertaken by Christopher Columbus and the great explorers. The confirmation that Columbus obtained, but on a higher plane. Idealism has left this question unanswered; perhaps materialism will find new answers.

In any event, there is a memory of an extreme approach that the spirit attained thanks to its voyages, of the glimpse of a timeless security and the euphoria that it bestows. "Once I lived like the gods"; if not in the light of transcendence, then at least in the transparent light that penetrates dust-covered windows.

It left its traces; it was a guide for free and light marches. The consequences can even be physical. In the French Foreign Legion, Charles belonged to the group of the old veterans; he had already served five years in Indochina, in a country towards which he felt nostalgic until the end of his life. I was a new recruit, a "blue", and I received different treatment when we were thrown in the brig. I was taken out in the morning to perform exercises on the pretext that I should not lose any time for training, while he was forced to march the whole day, in the courtyard of the prison, along with the rest of the prisoners. The pace was fast, and two bags of sand were added to the weight of their backpacks. This was intended in part as punishment, in part as training for marching. When we met again in front of the *salle de la police*, I saw the effects of this treatment on his face. He told me that it was nothing.

"You know what? During bad times like that I think of the nights I spent in Indochina; then the images come back, and the time passes before I even notice it."

In that period, when Charles wanted to smoke opium, which was only possible outside of the base, he had to do so while walking slowly, until at the break of dawn the trumpet called him back to his base. The paths were bordered with bamboo canebrakes, and it was dangerous, but no danger could have penetrated that nocturnal walk.

I mentioned this episode as an example of the fact that, not only danger, but also fatigue, even in its harshest forms, can be overcome. The spirit neutralizes pain, it annihilates it. The fakirs testify to this fact in a crude way.<sup>65</sup>

## 171

It does not seem strange to me that I met Charles Benoit immediately after my arrival, on the first night I spent at that fort, a veritable anthill of fugitives and losers of every variety, of deserters, adventurers, criminals and pederasts. There are affinities that act magnetically. We are lost like a needle in a haystack; but there is a second needle hidden there, too, hence the attraction; it is not chance, but law. The fate of the universe is not death by entropy, but concentration: concentration, too, by sympathy.

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<sup>65</sup> Charles Benoit is one of the main characters in *African Games* (1937), an autobiographical account in which Jünger provides a literary elaboration of his adolescent desertion from the French Foreign Legion while based in North Africa. See *Juegos africanos*, tr. Luis Alberto Martín, Guadarrama, Madrid, 1970, pp. 100-108. For a discussion of the metaphor of the psychic voyage, see the long passage dated September 17, 1942 in *Radiaciones I*, tr. Andrés Sánchez Pascual, Tusquets Editores (Andanza 98/1), Barcelona, 1989, pp. 353-355.

It is strange, however, that I met Charles again, almost forty years later, in 1950. In the meantime two world wars had taken place, and a few other events; he had endured battles, flights, councils of war and captivity. In 1921 he managed to cross the Spanish frontier, after having slit open the stomach of a local policeman's camel with his bayonet when the cop was trying to arrest him. During the Third Reich he was obliged to present himself regularly to the police: the old Legionnaires were under a cloud of suspicion. Now he was devoting himself, like most Swabians, to building his "house". It occurred to me that fate had reserved for him an existence as a *homme de peine*; and this corresponded to his inclinations. In Germany he had worked in a brick factory and then in a stone quarry; he had become accustomed to this kind of work in the disciplinary battalion. Now he was carrying hundreds of sacks of manure every day in a fertilizer factory.

I asked him again if this did not seem to him to be too hard a life. And he responded again that for him it was nothing. At first, the odor had seemed unpleasant; but, "What a relief! Now I don't smell it anymore. Except when it rains; then I smell it".

Another fifteen years passed before he finally got his sinecure; he became a watchman at a park. I was preparing to help him celebrate his eightieth birthday, which the community where he lived also wanted to celebrate with a party, when I received news of his death in May 1968.

By the way, I have noticed that my ability to distinguish between living and dead friends has declined; I have no other recourse than to always confirm the fact of death and my assent. And even then it is only possible in the light of day, not in dreams or when my mind wanders.

## 172

I took drops of a dark and bitter tincture of opium. Having just gone to bed, I began to feel something like a spiritual shift or switch. It could be a change from one vehicle to another, or shifting the gears, or another march. It was not a dream, but something different. Time passed more quickly but also more slowly, at the same time. This seems to be a contradiction; this phenomenon, however, has analogies in the world of technology. The pilot, in his cockpit with its dials and meters, thinks he is flying at a very great speed, but when he looks down towards the earth, he seems to be going very slowly, even when he is flying at more than the speed of sound. This is an aspect of the experience of our time.

I do not recall having visions, like those Charles mentioned, or like those described by De Quincey. They probably came to me in abundance, but remained behind the curtain. Or I have forgotten the details, now that I no longer see them, or with the passage of time. During normal dreams I do not lack images, of which I only remember those that strike me immediately upon awaking. The oneiric material, the seed of the images, is sensitive to light; and such annotations correspond to fixing the film in a photo lab. Only a minute

fragment of the world of dreams rises to consciousness, and even that fragment evaporates, in the blink of an eye, if we do not capture it.

## 173

Thus, I do not recall visions like those that delighted and horrified De Quincey. Instead, I have preserved a memory of their matrix: the terrain upon which they germinate and grow. The change of images is preceded by transformations of the spirit and of its receptivity. First of all, it is necessary to create a vacuum, just as every painting, every photograph, and every manuscript begins with the vision of a white surface. Time must be neutralized. This light, neutral beginning was pleasant. Sometimes it was interrupted by a soft ringing sound, as if to call my attention.

For De Quincey, this neutral backdrop<sup>66</sup> took the form of water; at first, it was like clear water in silent lakes, which later expanded to form seas and oceans. Then, suddenly, the torrent of images erupted; the sea was fragmented into countless faces that gazed imploringly towards the sky. Myriads of generations must have formed a flood over the course of thousands of years.

In this passage, De Quincey says that the sea is “paved” with human faces.<sup>67</sup> The image would appear to contain a contradiction: waves and paving stones are not reconcilable. However, this is one of those images that cannot possibly be invented; it unites the prodigious ductility of the spirit with the rigidity of vision. “Towers begirt with battlements that on their restless fronts bore stars”; the gargoyle on the tower, a crocodile, has fixed his gaze for thousands of years on the sea of houses. Now all these things appear together all at once.

This ductility is not just that of the fluid element, but also that of the spirit, which, according to Luther, is “one with water and is in water”. Water not only assumes the exact shape of the rocks over which it flows, but also, merging with them, takes them along in its course; finally, the limits between water and rock are diluted. Even the fish, which the waves transport, swims over granite.

## 174

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<sup>66</sup> The terms used by Jünger (*unqualifiziert* and *das Unqualifizierte*) literally mean something that is stripped of all quality and therefore indeterminate. They belong to the same semantic category as other similar terms, such as, on the one hand, *das Ungesonderte* (the undifferentiated) and *das Unvermessene* (the immeasurable) and, on the other hand, *Gespinst* (fabric), *Raster* (grid), and *Weißung* (whitening/bleaching).

<sup>67</sup> Jünger is referring to what De Quincey called “the tyranny of the human face”, a tormenting vision triggered by laudanum, related, according to the author, to his adolescent wanderings in the densely-populated metropolis of London. See Thomas De Quincey, *Suspiria de Profundis*.

Time passed pleasantly, although it hardly seemed to move. Thus, there are climates that we do not perceive as such, but which are directly transmuted into a feeling of well being; temperatures such as those that I have enjoyed, after sunset, at the Port of Rhodes. We feel neither cold nor hot, as in a lukewarm bath, but we do not note the weight of our body, either, our own weight. This is a pleasure that is bestowed much more frequently upon animals than upon human beings, especially upon the creatures of the sea and amphibians: "Couldst see how happy fishes live...."<sup>68</sup>

Then it became more mild, and more pleasant: it was a heat that abolished weight, and at the same time made it lighter. The cough that had tormented me for months seemed to be dispelled. This was the effect of the codeine.

The moon was shining into my room; its light illuminated it. Outside, on the dark grassland, the sinuous sandy paths were shining. Robert, the gardener, had returned to work and had raked them. His broken leg still bothered him. Now there were three wounded men in the house. Everything we wanted to start here, was provisional; nothing was the way it used to be.

I was thirsty and wanted to go to the bathroom for a glass of water. A moment before I had taken a teaspoon of the bitter syrup. Then I quietly opened the door to go down the hall; when you are in this state, it is no laughing matter to run into your mother or your father. My mother had her own problems, too, not only because of me and my brother, but because of something obscure and threatening that had insinuated itself into every corner of the house, in every crevice and cubbyhole.

Our personal and economic misfortunes took place exclusively on the surface of fate. My mother felt these misfortunes more deeply than my father: she was more susceptible to the impersonal aggression of fate, to which she responded with an energy that was nourished from the undifferentiated, from the substance of the people.<sup>69</sup> Sometimes, seated at the kitchen table, silent and absorbed in thought, she would suddenly say something that could have been written in an old chronicle, for example: "He inherited a beautiful kingdom."

I would not have been happy to see her, while I was in that state, in the hallway; it would have caused her pain. With her, it would not have helped to feign being sick or depressed, because she could penetrate any mask with her glance. We are never completely separated from our mothers, not even after our umbilical cords are cut. Sometimes, when I was far away from her, she saw me enter; this, as she said, consoled her. I, too,

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<sup>68</sup> This is from a verse from Goethe's ballad, *The Fisherman*. Here is the full stanza: "Couldst see how happy fishes live / Under the stream so clear, / Thyself would plunge into the stream, / And live for ever there". From John Storer Cobb's English translation of "The Fisherman", first published in *Goethe: Poetical Works*, vol. 1., Francis A Niccolls & Company, Boston, 1902.

<sup>69</sup> The term used by Jünger is *das Ungesonderte*, that is, the undifferentiated or undivided substance.

however, had felt as if I was approaching everything cool and peaceful, while I was lying half-dead in the bottom of the trench, and the combatants were killing each other all around me. That was only a few months before.

## 175

A clear light illuminated the vestibule, instilled with a spiritual substance, as if by an aurora borealis. In the bathroom I let the water run until it completely filled a large glass, while time almost stopped. I heard the melody. When glasses, jars or other receptacles are filled under the faucet, we generally do not notice the harmonious sound with which the solid element responds to the passage of a liquid. The rope of water acts like the bow on the string of a violin or like the air blown by a flute player into the metal tube. The glass responds to this like a vibrating substance. The sound becomes more clear as the water level rises. They are not arbitrary sounds, but connected with each other as in an orchestra; we could represent them on a musical score. They are expressions of matter that proceeds from the place where the grid reposes and vibrates. When time expands, we are more sensitive to the sounds that arise from silence. The origin cannot have been characterized by an explosion, since total darkness reigned then.

I heard how my glass was filled, as if going up a staircase. The finest temporal cadences and spatial structures vibrated in unison. At such moments, everything can become a musical instrument, but not one is the same as any other. Just as no hour is equal to any other; each one has its own resonance. The same melody sounds different to us at two in the morning than it does at midnight.

Generally, we do not notice the differences that are very close to the grid; we only begin to perceive them when the corpuscular image is so large that it is trapped in the fabric of the net.

## 176

I am still standing in the bathroom and listening to how the glass I am holding in my hand is being filled. These absent-minded moments are typical; they can issue into an endless loop. The loop is the symbol of the infinite; but please note that the loop is not closed; this is one of the subtleties of mathematics.

I hear the harmony of the mobile and the immobile elements; both were transparent: the running water and the glass. The sound adhered to the cylinder of the glass like the sucker of an octopus, and rose along its surface as it was being filled. Then it slid down into it, into its vortex. It was *me*, undoubtedly, who interpreted its melody there. Or maybe not? Was I within the material or had both my hand as well as the glass and the water been introduced within me, as if by a magic spell? It did not matter; in any event, this proved the truth of the verse written by my brother:

“And melody and instrument are *one*.”



In the encounter between melody and harmony, which we may call a coupling, time no longer plays any role. However, there is no delay in the enjoyment, otherwise art would cease to exist.

Then came a shock, a sudden unforeseen slip-up on the scale of vision: the water overflowed the top of the glass. I heard it run down the drain and I heard the sound of the subterranean world that sucked with so much force from the depths. A spiral descended towards chaos, until I felt as if I was in danger; I had to get away. I stepped back, but could not snap out of it; the dream included multiple layers. It was a leap in a direction that was out of step with the marching formation.

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I took the glass of water and I drank from it; the water was delicious and glittered like the glass in my hand. This is also how the sea glistens on nights when the nautilus, with his flagellum, rises to the surface and his luminous substance leaks phosphorescently onto the nets. I looked at myself in the mirror; my image was powerful, more powerful than I am.

Then I went back down the hall, silently, so that my mother would not hear me. I entered my room, and I found myself there, sleeping; I was able to wake myself up.

What then supervened was a recognition that shocked me as well as made me happy in an incomparable way. A reflection of this happiness must have been preserved in the old idols, whose smiles we find so intriguing. An astonishment shines forth that transcends cultural and racial frontiers. It is something that transcends even the realm of theology: even the gods are astonished like that.

I looked at the clock; two minutes must have passed, maybe three. On nights like that, there were more than a few occasions where I snapped out of it and returned from a long absence. And there was always an inexhaustible happiness in that awakening, so similar to that of the dead man who comes back to life, or to that of the traveler who recognizes his homeland after having been so far away from the frontiers of time.

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What happened to the essence during those absences, whose duration was just as indeterminate as their content? What is, generally speaking, that “being” (*Wesen*)? Long before there were philosophers, a handful of Indo-European auxiliary verbs had already divided up the cosmos.

When we say, “he is absent” (*abwesend*), this expression can refer to a state in which that “he” is also, at the same time, present (*anwesend*); the suffix, “-ent” (*wesen*) must therefore express more an activity than a state. The present and the absent are cleavages of being. Essence has a temporal power; being, a supratemporal power. If we are speaking of a plant, of an animal, of a man, or of a State as “essences/entities” (*Wesen*)

we include in its meaning the reference to a process of “something that is decomposing” (*Verwesendes*).

Light is absent in shadow, the word is absent in silence, woman is absent in man. However, the absent borders on the essence and finds itself at the same time “present”. If it is separated from it, one runs the risk of ending up like “the man who lost his shadow”.

The German word *Wesen* (“essence”) is also originally linked to Vesta, the goddess of the home. When the master, who was absent (*abwesend*), returned to take possession of his property (*Anwesen*), he found everything in order.

## 179

De Quincey’s ode to opium must have been inspired not only by knowledge, but also by personal experience, at least in passages like this:

“Thou buildest upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain, cities and temples, beyond the art of Phidias and Praxiteles—beyond the splendour of Babylon and Hekatompylos; and, ‘from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,’ callest into sunny light the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances, cleansed from the ‘dishonours of the grave’. Thou only givest these gifts to man; and thou hast the keys of Paradise, oh just, subtle, and mighty opium!”<sup>70</sup>

He then proceeds immediately to the chapter, “Introduction to the Pains of Opium”. It is not by chance that being entombed and imprisoned play the main role here. Piranesi’s *Carceri*, which De Quincey had once viewed in the company of Coleridge, notably influenced his visions. In fact, those prisons full of machines, where spiral staircases seem to ascend and descend into infinity, represent a Baroque model of the Labyrinth. Such works presuppose a geometric fascination, an upwelling of the deepest layers of the world of numbers, which crystallize forms. This has been a recurring motif in art since its very beginnings; one fine day the eye was obliged to see the sinuous twisting of a river as meanders, and since then this game of lines has been endlessly repeated. An anonymous person saw geometric necessity behind geographic chance. Discoveries of this type have been made for millennia. A plume of the ancient serpent has been captured. This sense of claustrophobia weighs not only on the artist; he transmits it to the spectator, as if he had pronounced a magic spell. Among our contemporaries, we must mention Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898-1972), a master of fantastic perspectives whose objective precision shocked as well as perplexed. A rare bird in our contemporary world: a painter who simultaneously knows how to see and knows his job. He is himself aware of this: “No matter how objective or how impersonal the majority of my subjects appear to me, so far as I have been able to discover, few if any of my fellow-men seem to react in the same way to all that they see around them” (1960).

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, “The Pleasures of Opium”.

Even more distressing than captivity in prisons, for the author of the *Confessions*, is being walled-up in the heart of the pyramids, where the merciless and ineluctable victory of time is petrified. There, reptiles with sharp fangs lurk as eternal guardians, especially the horrible crocodile. He is always there; his sudden appearance, his eruption, recalls the chronicles of travelers who saw him erupt unexpectedly from below the dried up mud of the Nile.

These horrors are concentrated in the famous passages of the *Confessions* that have fascinated generations of readers. They describe a meandering course: "I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins, with mummies and sphynxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.... The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him, and (as was always the case almost in my dreams) for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses, with cane tables, &c. All the feet of the tables, sofas, &c., soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions; and I stood loathing and fascinated."<sup>71</sup>

These images depict the automatism of movement and the rigidity that characterize the dream-states of opium. Although an infinite number of things happen, time does not pass. Sometimes, the dreamer becomes aware of his condition and suffers a disturbance in the foundations of his perception, as if an emergency brake had stopped a flight at the speed of light. The millwheel, from which the images leaked, did not turn in time.

In De Quincey's time, paleontology was still in its early stages, otherwise he would have undoubtedly observed that his galleries of horrible reptiles recalled the dinosaur: as the original reptile that, buried for thousands of years in strata of limestone and slate, is finally brought to light. In such accelerations the whiplash effect is extraordinary. Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, who, as a hypersensitive, did not need opium, also experienced it. Thus, in her poem, *The Marl Pit*:

*Ah, on this slab of slate there are jellyfish;  
they seemed still to be brandishing their pointed rays  
at the moment when they were hurled from the bosom of the sea  
and the mountain sank down to crush them.  
Of a certainty the ancient world is no more,  
and I am a fossil, the bone of a mammoth, in it!*  
....

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas de Quincey, *op. cit.*, "May 1818".

*And my dream takes on a new course,  
I was covered with sand like a mummy,  
my robe dust, my face ashes,  
and not even the scarab was lacking.*

De Quincey (1785-1859) was born before the Westphalian poet (1797-1848) and outlived her. Nonetheless, *The Marl Pit* was written twenty years after the *Confessions*, and by that time paleontology was no longer in its infancy. If I say again that the dinosaurs are indebted to von Droste at least for their partial resurrection, it is not to be taken lightly.

## 182

Knowledge is superior to science. Knowledge assumes its form by way of the various disciplines. Let us once again take up the question of presence and absence. When the geologist's pick frees the ichthyosaur from the shale, then the beast is present, or at least his mummy or his fossil is present. This presence was always possible, even in the times of Scheuchzer, when such discoveries were interpreted as relics of the Flood.

Then something new arose, which cleared the way for science and even for knowledge: an Eros of vision, capable of abolishing time by penetrating it. It evokes the absent to cause it to become present. This absence had not originated thanks to time, however long it may have lasted. Time is nothing but a form of absence.

The memory of these beings was extinguished for millions of years. Eros has carried out a resurrection; at least as far as its most important part, the Platonic aspect. If, independently of that precedent, a living dinosaur had been discovered, in, for example, a virgin jungle or on Mars, this discovery would only be a simple curiosity compared with the rebirth made possible by the spirit.

A partial resurrection, then, an evocation of its presence in the great arena of representation. And, thus, only an ephemeral copy, an allegory of the mystery. Only an approach.

## 183

The pyramids—within whose chambers De Quincey, transformed into a mummy, suffered the torment of time, without any hope of salvation—are also copies, similes. It had to happen there, in the shadow of the kingdom where the problem of resurrection had most obsessively occupied the spirit.

Buried in the deepest depths of dream, the dead wait, for thousands of years, for the absent to return and to restore them to life. This restoration will bring not just a new life, but also a higher form of life, since the living have foreseen it, if only fleetingly and allegorically. Thus, in the lovers' embrace and prayer.

The problem of the other side has accompanied us since the beginning.<sup>72</sup> It is not the monopoly of priests and sacerdotal knowledge; it existed before them and will continue to exist after they are gone. Materialism will resolve it in its own way; against it, its technical devices will subsist, like the ornaments of the royal tombs in the antechambers.

Even today, when the individual meditates in the heart of his pyramid, he does not think of motors, space voyages or atomic bombs. Only one problem absorbs his attention, a problem that millions of years will not be enough to solve, for it hearkens beyond all procreation and all origins.

Doctors, who see so many people die, know little about death.

## 184

Celtic blood must have flowed in De Quincey's veins, and in Droste's, too. For both, the interval, that is, the lapse of time between the present and the absent, was essentially a time of pain—it is possible that in the work of Annette von Droste there are Christian influences, while in De Quincey one detects classical echoes. In Purgatory, as in Hades, an indeterminate time reigns. For Novalis, the interval is a brief pilgrimage, followed by restoration:

*Over I pilgrim  
Where every pain  
Zest only of pleasure  
Shall one day remain.*<sup>73</sup>

If the hunter was buried with his bow and arrows in his burial mound, this is because he was certain that in the beyond he would pass the time in a pleasant way. The Egyptian funerary chambers are ornamented like the palaces of princes, as are the burial ships of the Germans. The banquets and amorous pursuits of the inhabitants of the subterranean world of Tarquinia are of a marvelous good cheer. They are even redolent of a zest for life. The Etruscans, like the Lydians and the Celts, survive in fairy tales. The cremation of the dead was contemplated, and still is, as a temporary transition. "With their fiery arms they will raise into heaven."<sup>74</sup> The road to Purgatory, on the other hand, is tedious and full of torments.

## 185

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<sup>72</sup> In 1934, Jünger dedicated a brief essay, *Die Staub-Dämonen*, to *The Other Side*, the fantastic tale of Alfred Kubin, known above all as an artist and illustrator of dreamscapes and disturbing universes.

<sup>73</sup> From George MacDonald's 1897 translation of *Hymns to the Night*.

<sup>74</sup> From the Hindu legend, as related by Goethe in his ballad, "The God and the Temple Dancer", the last three verses of which are as follows: "That the gods should console the contrite sinner;/and with their fiery arms they will raise into heaven/the poor mortals who had fallen into wretchedness", tr. Rafael Cansinos Asséns, in *Obras Completas I*, p. 882.

One particular aspect of the problem consists in determining whether the “Great Transition”,<sup>75</sup> that is, the abolition of time by way of restitution, can be achieved in any “circumstance”, as a result of each circumstance, or whether, to the contrary, it must fail and thus sink into the fearful stagnation of time. Religions offer diverse answers with regard to the method, but not with regard to the accuracy, of their claims.

That unmediated representations should be formed about transcendence does not please the priestly hierarchies. Such representations can be achieved by way of initiation and meditation. Mystics, ecstasies, visionaries, and freethinkers were always suspect in the eyes of the Church, despite the very great debts the Church owed to them. That which flows through them must be attenuated and filtered through a slow process, it must pass through a mediation. Finally, in certain circumstances, a halo condenses. As for the thinkers, from Heraclitus to Nietzsche, they have almost never been welcomed.

Demeter and Dionysius do not need any kind of mediation; they approach without beating around the bush. One undoubtedly encounters guides for dreamers and for the dead there, but they do not work by way of teaching but, like Aphrodite, by way of physical contact or, like Orpheus, with verses and music. There, the subterranean world shines, with its treasures and its great metamorphoses. Its light also complements that of day, which, transfigured, is transformed into Eleusinian light.

These are metamorphoses that are heralded not only under the structures of technology, but also by penetrating into their interior. Now there is a cement factory in Eleusis. This would have perhaps implied a nuisance for the minor mysteries, which are celebrated in the spring, but not for the great mysteries, which are celebrated in autumn. Cement and marble are surfaces when one recognizes the “maternal bosom of Persephone”. Then there are no more differences.

## 186

The word, crocodile, comes from “Krokê-drilos”, the “worm of stone”. He comes up to the opium eater and gives him “cancerous kisses”. Time becomes a nightmare; the sleeper is buried under the weight of the pyramid, and, immobilized by the bandages of the mummy, he is ineluctably exposed to its terrors.

Baudelaire saw this anxiety as a kind of punishment that follows in the wake of prolonged abuse of the drug. It is a just observation; all ecstatic intoxication comes with a

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<sup>75</sup> Jünger distinguishes between the “Great Transition”, with capital letters, and the “lesser transition”; the peculiarity of the former is that it presupposes a departure from the space of history, a leap over the wall of time, or extreme approach. In this sense, great historical achievements like the French Revolution and other ephemera are merely lesser transitions. On the other hand, the death or the birth of a single person already presupposes a Great Transition, as does the supervention of Dionysius and its forms of ecstatic intoxication in the life of individuals and peoples.

price. However, an argument could be made in favor of paying this price if one also takes into account the fact that De Quincey knew how to condense into a few pages an awe-inspiring aspect of time, in whose vortices we go astray like shipwrecked sailors in the nocturnal sea. We need to expand our horizons in order to once again discover this order of greatness, perhaps by hearkening back to the Epistles to the Corinthians or the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch.

## 187

In its balance sheets, time not only demands the repayment of a “debt”, but also concedes an “asset”; and time is more valuable than any other possession.

When I returned from the bathroom and woke up out of my dreamlike state, I was pleased to meet myself again after a long absence. I had one other reason for happiness, however. Looking at the clock, I realized with astonishment that only a few minutes had passed. Therefore, I still had an immense reserve of time and I could prolong, without limits, this delicious night. I let a few drops of laudanum fall into the glass.

The night was a blanket that offered heat and security; I wrapped it more tightly around my body. Time became space, dense like a narrow chamber which is no longer in the heart of the pyramid, but far below it. There, so far below, nothing happened, only a sepulchral silence reigned, an impregnable solitude. On the surface, they could be competing in battles or races, they could be feasting or killing each other—I had so little to do with all of that, it was as distant from me as those who fell in the war. There, up above, need and hunger prevailed, fires and executions reigned, the tribunals pronounced their sentences. There, time wove its absurd fabric of ropes and barbed wire. Here, down below, it became as fine as silk, colorless and without designs and, at last, the thread ran imperceptibly through my hand. I did not feel any knots or abrasions. Not even any fatherlands.

## 188

It was the nearness of the grid; the habit of unwinding fabric was counted among the Hippocratic symptoms of imminent death. I would like to conclude this chapter by mentioning a new phenomenon.

Awakening—I am referring to the everyday kind of awakening—is accompanied on every occasion by an effort of orientation. This happens especially in abrupt awakenings; the compass is thrown completely off course. When we are awakened by a sudden shock at night, it takes quite a bit of effort to orient ourselves on the symmetrical axis; we all know this extraordinary effort. Often, it takes a long time before we get our bearings and realize that our body is in our bedroom.

The ancients loved to compare sleep and death, and even believed that we live like gods in our dreams; on this point, there are many different opinions. In any event, we have the feeling that the day steals something from us; it forces us to return to time.

“Once, I lived like the gods”: some dreamers never come back or, like Scardanelli,<sup>76</sup> remain lost for many years in an intermediate realm. Many people wake up happy, many also wake up sad, but we always miss, whether or not we are aware of this, the power that dreaming restores to us.

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“It has nothing to do with history”: this is more than just a pleasant feeling. It is something more than a temporary exemption; it is the exemption from time, it is the absolution that the individual grants himself. This comforts him even on the way to the gallows. The condemned man attends the event as if it were “a hanging in another world” (Des Réaux). And a world that is not his world.

This feeling is one of the gifts that are bestowed by ecstatic intoxication. It is a preparatory exercise. The poppy, from time immemorial synonymous with dreams and forgetting, also has the property of dilating time, almost to the infinite—not the time of the clocks, with their cosmic and omnipotent constraint, but the time that is, unreservedly, the dwelling and the property of man, and at the same time present and absent. This is the greatest luxury: to dispose of one’s own time. For this reason, it is always interpreted as disorder. *Luxus, luxuria*. This is especially true today, when we live under the rule of clocks. Anyone who disposes of his own time is suspect. Consequently, the forest subsists, even when it has been clear-cut. There, there is another time, the kind experienced in the forest by the monk from Heisterbach.<sup>77</sup>

“But what the deuce had he to do in that Galley?”, as Molière’s G ron te said. To synchronize the rhythms, which are coordinated everywhere, even in the most distant domains, on the basis of normal time, is the fundamental job of the *clerks*. On the need for all of this we have spoken at length in other passages, concerning whitening. A feeling of hangover after excess is inevitable in an era when the synchronization with normal time has seized upon domains destined, by their very nature, to be distanced from it, like music. Here, the absent is immediately incorporated into consciousness.

### ***Supplementary Notes on Opium***

190

Concerning the grid. Today is November 1, 1969; I have just returned from Agadir, after a brief interruption of my work on the manuscript. There, among the golden dunes, the *dune d’or*, the sand is of the finest texture that I have ever seen on any beach. Each wave

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<sup>76</sup> Pseudonym under which H lderlin published some of last poems, such as the so-called *Poems of a Madman*.

<sup>77</sup> According to legend, Caesarius of Heisterbach lost track of time when he got lost in a forest while he was listening to the song of a nightingale that represented eternity. See also the epigraph preceding section 25.



that breaks on the shore, after a long unfolding, leaves its traces on the area it covered: delicate braids, lines of rings like the annual rings of trees, displays of the lines of life, prophetic signs in the form of a spindle, and the tails of comets that adhere to the pebbles and to the shells tossed up by the sea. The sand provides the grid, which the sea employs with art. Its extraordinary fineness has the effect that the undivided power of the material is filtered through the most delicate of screens. Sand and wave, earth and water, Neptune and Gaia, time and space are united under the light of the African sun, until they form a chain of cosmic auguries. This spectacle is also seen from afar. Every wave erases the old sketches and traces new ones with the trail of its foam.

It is not that objects are lacking here. For two weeks, I was busy with relatively small objects, but I also saw larger wrecks abandoned by the tide—a gigantic ray, for example, the skeleton of a dolphin, a palm tree, and a ship that had run aground.

A central question of art criticism, probably the most important one of all, is the following: how is it possible for the artist to approach the grid? I have before me the beautiful image of a ray created by Bernard Buffet (born in 1928); the fish lies upon a base of bricks: there, the grid seems crude.

It is the merit of Gaston Bachelard, in his brief but profound reflections in *La flamme d'une chandelle* [The Flame of a Candle] (1964), to have brought to light an observation of George Sand, which is pertinent to our theme. Sand asks, in her *Consuelo*, how Rembrandt, by way of nebulous gradations of a light brown color and another darker brown, could produce in one of his paintings such spatial effects that the meanings of the objects represented are altered by this vague illumination; with this effect, it was as if these objects were submerged in the indivisible, and then emerged from the depths invested with a new light.

This passage is instructive both with respect to the importance as well as to the insignificance of objects. Naturally, what is important is not the why, but the how of art; the motive is in itself irrelevant. If a style crystallizes and augments the importance of the technical conditions, one will observe a turn towards the indivisible, which cannot lead beyond the grid. They are not so much advances towards, as retreats from, the phenomenal world; they culminate in tragic conflicts, when they coincide with phases in which mastery has been achieved. Frozen at the end of autumn, jellyfish that rise up from the depths of the sea in the shadow of the mountains.

The influence of the grid is more an object of sensation than of demonstration: it demands in the material world a subtlety of perception, analogous to that which is demanded in the spiritual world for the knowledge of metaphysical elements. Invisible structures can become visible in another key by transposition, like the microscopic structure of the atoms in a rock crystal the size of a man. They can also be manifested in the diffuse, as George Sand experienced thanks to the art of Rembrandt. In the final analysis, the galaxies are also formed of stars—this is something that can be sensed, even without the high resolution of our electronic telescopes.

There is much that can be expected, in this respect, from the progress of photography, when it has been freed from the obsolete antithesis of art and technology. Here, too, synthesis can create something new: magic.<sup>78</sup>

## 191

A second note: concerning time's influence on sound. Among the works that I read during those weeks at Agadir was D'Herisson's *Journal d'un interprète en Chine* (1886). A hundred years ago, the author, who was at the time a young soldier, accompanied General Montauban during the operations that followed the Taiping Rebellion. He is a good observer and his book is worth reading, if only because it recorded some details concerning one of the greatest looting operations in the history of the world: the sacking of the Summer Palace in Peking, an imperial residence full of priceless treasures. Its looting was like a festival that lasted for weeks, and concluded with the burning of the palace.

In actions of this kind, we behold the repetition of the eruption of an elemental power into a higher civilization; higher, at least, by virtue of its lifestyle and its refinement. Palaces in flames are part of the scenery, like the Palace of Darius in Persepolis or that of Montezuma in Mexico.

With respect to the relation between sound and time I am reminded of the description of a watermelon, which D'Herisson praised as incomparably superior to the Italian variety and even the Spanish. He had heard the Chinese say that watermelons attained their peak of ripeness when they were harvested at night, before the dew covered them. The harvest had to be conducted under a rule of strict silence; since this, the most delicate fruits, would burst if it was exposed to the slightest sound. Among the tricks perpetrated by a bad neighbor, one consisted of banging on a gong at night, during harvest time, in an adjoining garden, causing major damage.

It will be understood that these refinements of horticulture and of the pleasures that accompany it have now become impossible. A jet fighter would annihilate the harvest of an entire province. We are threatened by similar experiences in viticulture. Just as in fortunate eras, everything is music and melody, so, too, is everything a reason for joy: the loving care which the grape grower bestows upon his vines, no less than the voluptuous pleasure of a discerning wine-taster when he hears of a good harvest. Masters and servants are united in a duet.

D'Herisson also tells us that they inserted a tap into those exquisite fruits and filled them with Madeira or even with kirsch; a practice that is still enjoyed. Generally speaking,

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<sup>78</sup> The stereoscopic gaze of magic realism, like certain traits of photographic optics, contemplates the drug experience as a laboratory for reviving the perception of the aura. During the 1920s and 1930s Jünger edited various books of photographs on the war experience, technology and the modern metropolis. See *Ernst Jünger: Guerra, técnica y fotografía*, ed. Nicolas Sánchez Durá, University of Valencia, 2000.

those campaigns in China undertaken by the European states, which took place throughout the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century, were notable for their combination of arrogance, brutality and stupidity. Eruptions of barbarians into an empire that could boast of being the oldest and highest civilization that had ever existed on the planet.

### *Carp “à la polonaise”*

192

My nauseating experience with chloroform was obviously not enough to cure me of my yearning to explore such no-man’s-lands; the “main course” had yet to be served.

After the war, when her children had grown up and things had almost returned to normal, my mother could take trips more often; it was her great pleasure. When the leaves turned red in the forests of Bohemia, she went to Karlsbad for three weeks, and at the beginning of summer she went to Weimar for a brief vacation; both places were easy to travel to; one benefited her physical health, and the other her spiritual health.

In Weimar she stayed at The Elephant and made arrangements for a cab to take her to the Belvedere, the Tiefurt House and Ettersburg Castle. She knew *Faust* by heart and could carry on an entire conversation by stringing together quotations—which was not rare at the time. The use of quotations was one of the weaknesses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Georg Büchmann (died in 1884) published three editions of his *Famous Sayings*. This genre has since gone out of fashion, as had already occurred with the type of reader who was well-versed in the Bible. Both cases presuppose a homogeneous stratum of educated people.

Only once did I join my mother in trips to those two cities, although I liked to travel with her—especially beyond the Alps, but also beyond the Main. My mother recovered her cheerfulness there; her nature revived. She felt better especially on the soil of ancient Rome. She would not have been out of place in a Feuerbach painting. In our Northern lands, this light, almost ethereal, effervescence, unclouded by any sediment, is rare. She faced not a few tribulations; five children are always a cause for worry. Her greatest fear, as she confessed to me later, was that one of her children “would get mixed up in some monkey business that could not be remedied”. In such a case she could be relied on, and more than ever.

To be seated in company with my mother, with an uncorked bottle of wine, was a great pleasure on either side of the Alps; this memory still comforts me. In Munich, her hometown, we drank beer with particular joy at the Schneider Bräuhaus, in Tal. In Innsbruck we frequented the Golden Roof; in Garmisch the Post Office Café. Then she ordered wine from the north or the south of the Tyrol, and chestnuts. I cannot recall the topics of our conversations, but I can clearly recall the atmosphere that accompanied them—this is a good sign; the words dissolve from our memories before the melodies. When we want to approach our mothers, this is the right way to do so.

We went on those trips in the *anno sancto* of 1925, when my mother accompanied me to Naples. Since then, whenever I think of the Roman churches, Santa Maria Maggiore is especially dear to me; we were there together when the Cardinal led a procession. The rays of the sun fell obliquely through the stained glass windows on the mosaics; priests were sitting in the confessionals, and now and then one of them would tap one of the faithful with a kind of fishing pole—it was a very ancient image. By the way, I only heard my mother utter the word “Mary” once, in a prayer that sounded strange to me, when Felix, my younger brother, died. Perhaps it was a memory of her early childhood, for ever since she was a girl she had rebelled against the customs of my grandparents, who went from one church to another every Sunday. In those days, she was reading Ibsen, and once, while she was in the company of her brother, had spoken with him when he was sitting in the sun at the Luitpold café. The rebellious women of that generation were close to her heart; in her last years, her favorite books were the *Memoirs of a Socialist*, by Lily Braun, and the diaries of the Countess von Reventlow. When she was told that one of the first suffragettes, I think it was a Mrs. Pankhurst, had destroyed a masterpiece at the British Museum, she thought it was good news. There is a photograph that shows this lady being arrested by a policeman; she was wearing a skirt that covered her legs all the way to her ankles.

My grandmother from Munich visited us every now and then, almost always when my mother was about to give birth. She prayed almost without interruption; in any case, I remember her as a gray little old lady, who was always muttering to herself. The fact that my mother should have married a heretic was for her, naturally, a misfortune, and even perhaps a catastrophe. She allowed me to go to the market with her, where, after having spent a long time examining all the wares on sale, she still regretted spending a penny, even if the merchant sold his goods at the cheapest price. Also, she introduced meals that were previously unknown to us, such as, for example, a second breakfast at eleven. This tendency to a modest comfort was a peculiarity of even the most petty bourgeois residents of Munich; they resided in a city that was both prosperous and cheap, and which did not lack for contrasts. There, the “children of this world and the pious souls, too,” felt at home.

The journey to which I am referring was a short one; it took us from Saxony to Hannover, where we both had business to attend to—I, supposedly, after the conclusion of my leave from the army, and my mother, with regard to moving from our previous home. That would place it, then, at the beginning of the twenties. Those were times of political unrest; our journey was interrupted by a railroad workers strike.

My father accompanied us to the train station; as was almost always the case in the morning, he was in a very good mood; he was a real morning person. Early in the morning you would hear him on the stairs, not in the role of Sarastro, but in that of Papageno, which corresponded with his voice and his state of mind. He sang or whistled coming down the stairs; going up the stairs, he would take two or three steps at a time. By then he had overcome his financial problems. The inflation crisis had passed over him like a wave that submerges us before it reaches its crest and subsides.

In Leipzig, we had a stopover for a few hours, long enough to have a leisurely lunch and then take a walk around the city. Although the rising cost of living had only just begun to take effect, rationing had already been relaxed; I infer this from the fact that, in the restaurant of the gigantic train station, there was an *à la carte* menu. In more intimate surroundings, the bill of fare would have been almost luxurious. The restaurant was situated on a raised level, as in most of the large train stations, which had evidently been constructed according to a common model. So we went up the stairs and we were seated at a small table; a *maître d'* presented us with the menu.

“Look”, I said, after reading the menu carefully, “here is a dish that I have been curious about for a long time.”

“Probably, as always, it’s some culinary extravagance. What is it called?”

“Carp *à la polonaise*.”

“I hope all your desires will be so easy to satisfy. Alright, order it, or else you will be dreaming of carp tonight.”

I did, only to realize once again that in whims like this the imagination plays the leading role. Not in vain do restaurants constantly feature new names and descriptions for dishes that are always the same. I should have known better, since I have always preferred freshwater fish, including the famous trout, on the hook rather than on the table—excepting those kinds that swim up the rivers from the sea, like the salmon and the eel. Fish that lie slumbering in stagnant or still waters do not develop any muscle.

It is rare to find carp *à la polonaise* in domestic kitchens; the preparation is complicated and is only worth the trouble if you are cooking for a large group. Various strange spices, light and dark beer, onions and mushrooms, caramelized sugar and syrup, pepper bread crumbs, and even more ingredients are indispensable, not to forget the blood of the fish, obtained by making an incision that must not damage the bile gland. Served on a platter of toasted white bread it would be an imperial dish for an Oriental table, a delicacy at a Jewish wedding—it must not be confused, by the way, with the *carpe à la juive* of Lorraine that is served in gelatin as an appetizer. That is more or less how I remember it; on this occasion, however, it was served in small pieces, and disappointment was inevitable. Many dishes make our mouths water when we read about them in cookbooks or in the memoirs of Casanova or when we are thinking about them in a tavern. The mind must contribute nine-tenths of the pleasure, and it is an old problem, that one cannot save the remaining tenth for later, for supernatural nuptial feasts. We thus return to our theme: in the desert, Saint Anthony transformed his hunger into an overflowing abundance.

After picking through the soft flesh of the fish and the pepper bread soaked in dark beer, I seemed content when we left the restaurant. Although I said that the dish was delicious, my mother saw through my irony.

In Brühl they had leather hides on display again. It was not that they needed money, but only that now it was distributed differently. Once, on the occasion of an imperial visit, the facades of the houses on both sides of the street had been completely covered with hides, as if they were the flanks of a gigantic animal; my mother mentioned this fact. I preferred to loiter in front of the shop windows of the bookstores that sold used or new books. Leipzig is a city of merchants and books, a good combination. We turned the corner of the city hall and Auerbach's tavern and, without being in a hurry, we reached the train station, even after having a cup of coffee at the Felsche café. Anyway, we only got as far as Halle, where the train stopped. The railroad workers had gone on strike; the platforms were crowded with angry, more or less desperate passengers. We had to get off the train.

I suppose it was a regional work stoppage. Anyway, it lasted only until the next morning. In the meantime, one part of the crowd had dispersed to the waiting room of the station, and the other part had gone to the hotel. We also managed to find two rooms in the vicinity of the station; the lobby of the hotel was packed with foreigners who were gesticulating or sitting on their baggage. One was going to a wedding, another was going to be late to a funeral, another was counting his money, which was not enough to pay for a room for the night.

"Just what we needed!", said my mother, "and in Halle of all places." She harbored some kind of prejudice against the city, with whose origins I am unacquainted. And her prejudice would be confirmed yet again. Outside, it began to drizzle; it was November, if not according to the calendar, then at least by the weather. It was probably late winter, since the street was covered with dirty slush. Anyway, we were lucky to have found a refuge; we said good night and we then retired to our rooms to get some rest. Our rooms were connected by a door.

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After having taken my personal effects from my valise which, at the time, was still called a *necessaire*, I made myself comfortable and put on my pajamas. There was a chair in the room that had known better days; I reclined upon it, put my legs up on a coffee table and covered them with the blanket. Now it was time to read, a duty I almost never neglected to perform.

At that time, in Halle, I had brought along a small edition of *The Thousand and One Nights*. When I was taking it out of my valise, my glance fell upon a porcelain container, about the size of my palm, which bore an embossed oval inscription: EXTR. CANNABIS. It was perfect: I could take advantage of my stay in this place to test this experience; anyway, I was accustomed to doing three or four things at the same time. Thus, I could read, drink tea, smoke a pipe, pet the cat and also think about this or that pleasant experience—all these things harmonized well, when they were unified by right state of mind.

The porcelain container was made in such a way that it could have held twenty cigarettes; it had a small lid, with a clasp shaped like an acorn. It was an example of the sobriety that

flourished in the last years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at first as a reduction of surface area, which still did not affect the proportions. This tendency can be observed in every domain, but especially in the work of silversmiths. Druggists' jars were no exceptions. This reduction becomes evident when we compare the offices of the late Baroque period, such as have been preserved in Salzburg or Mergentheim, with our contemporary laboratories. In Oslo, the Swan Pharmacy shows what the Imperial style was still capable of creating, not only with regard to artisanal works, but also in symphonic performances.

As for the containers, they were either broken one by one with the passage of time, or else they were retired when the proprietor decided to update his equipment. The Lion Pharmacy in Leisnig must have known a whole series of such containers after having been obtained its license. The latter was granted by August the Strong. In the old documents we can still note extraordinary privileges, such as, for example, the right to manufacture Theriac right in the middle of the marketplace.

When they were not destroyed, the superfluous containers found a place on a shelf in the storage room. That is where the medicinal herbs were stored in the old days. Hardly a trace of such things remains, since plants have long since disappeared from the old pharmacies and, with them, so have the magnificent botanists of the stature of Parkinson (author of *Paradisus Terrestris*, published in London in 1629).<sup>79</sup> Now they no longer administer leaves, flowers, roots or bark, but active principles.

For a long time, nothing had been stored up there but old junk. I used to like to poke around up there, and I could do so whenever I wanted. Of course, the old rectangular bottles, made of colored glass embossed with inscriptions, had long since disappeared, but these porcelain jars had not yet become museum pieces. There were more than a hundred of them in the storage room in the loft; they must have been put there, all at once, God knows when. I picked out a few of them, choosing the ones with labels that were more or less odd.

The glassware had to have been manufactured at a nearby factory, about sixty years before, and was put into storage maybe thirty or forty years later. The small jars had contained ointments, but only rarely does the pharmacist dispense their contents with a spoon, which, like the mortar and pestle and even the scale, has gradually gone out of use.

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<sup>79</sup> John Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris* [*Park-in-Sun's Terrestrial Paradise*]: *Or A Garden of All Sorts of Pleasant Flowers which our English Ayre will Permitt to be Noursed Vp. With a Kitchen Garden of All Manner of Herbes, Rootes, & Fruites, for Meate or Sause Vsed with Vs, and an Orchard of All Sorte of Fruitbearing Trees and Shrubbes Fit for Our Land. Together with the Right Orderinge, Planting & Preserving of Them and Their Uses and Vertues Collected by Iohn Parkinson Apothecary of London*, Humfrey Lownes and Robert Young, London, 1629 [American translator's note, based on the Wikipedia entry for John Parkinson].

Besides, the names embossed on the porcelain jars referred, in part, to substances that, now that they were obsolete, no longer figured in doctor's prescriptions. The *extractum Cannabis*, for example, was only used occasionally in Western pharmacies, while in the East it was considered to be a panacea. It was obtained by rolling the cannabis leaves on planks and scraping off the residues, or by having men walk through fields of cannabis wearing leather aprons, to which the resinous residues adhered. In the West, pills and tinctures of cannabis were effective remedies for insomnia, melancholia and depression; they were used, along with opium, as psycho-pharmaceuticals.

In every pharmacy there was a kind of domestic gnome, a factotum, who, besides running errands, performed all the tasks that did not require any particular skills. One of these tasks involved refilling the containers, and the assistant probably spared himself the trouble of cleaning them first. With the passage of time, the contents dried up like an Egyptian mummy, petrified and crystallized. Some substances have preserved their consistency over a long period of time in a most surprising way; among them, extract of cannabis. A layer of resin covered the bottom of the jar, which had acquired a dark, glassy green color, such as is described in the manuals. It is true that, according to the treatises, with the passage of time the substance should have turned gray, and should have lost some of its potency.

Anyway, it would not hurt to try it; perhaps a trace of the active principle remained in the paste. I committed the typical betrayal of trust, by taking not only the container, but also the contents. This recklessness was certainly contrary to the sensible judgment of my father, but this was not the only secret I concealed from him.

For my father, intoxication was a disgusting vice. How was it possible to reconcile a passion for the music of Mozart with a rational interpretation of the surrounding world and its problems? How would such a thing be possible for a penetrating, and even incisive intellect? This is a question that I have often asked myself. In any event, the common denominator had to lie at a great depth. Which speaks in favor of Mozart, and also of my father. I have only seen him tipsy on two or three occasions, and then only slightly tipsy. Then he would light a cigarette and take a few drags. He loved difficult problems, but only if they could be solved, like a chess move. The eruption of irrational ideas and elements upset him; he abhorred excess just as, in general, he abhorred the unpredictable. From major phenomena he extracted the mathematical details, in order to devote himself to their examination; thus, of the operations of the First World War, which seemed confused to him, he selected only the Battle of Skagerrak. Like all pharmacists, he had some unpleasant experiences with morphine addicts. This topic was taboo among us.

The paste, as I said, was an intense green color, like the color of the branches of pine trees in a snow-covered forest. I had not brought a spoon with me, or any kind of knife, so I took out my toothbrush and dipped it into the paste at the bottom of the jar, that is, I used the celluloid handle of the toothbrush, which was a transparent red color, like a caramel. A dab of resin adhered to it, a sticky substance that felt rough on my teeth. Maybe it had not been sitting around as long as I thought.



Now I could shift gears, get up off the ground. The course of the day often seemed to me like a road covered with broken glass: gray, lacerating, full of dissonances. However, there was still the hope that in this landscape something would take shape and articulate itself, round off and melt into a unitary form—something that would not require so much an effort of will as a capacity for vision. Reading offered me an example.

I do not specifically recall which of the stories from that great book that I began, and continued, to read at the time—I have forgotten the title, while I still remember the plot. It is expressed time and time again, with greater or lesser clarity, in stories in which the almost unlimited extension of time becomes visible. Magicians like to show off their powers, so that even in our time they perform the “miracle of the mango tree”. In newsreels you see them, seated, with their hands motionless. In some stories, all they need is a cup of water; they beg the sultan in whose court they are guests to lower his head. The sultan then hears a roaring sound, as if he was sinking in the sea, on the bottom of which he undertakes a pilgrimage that leads him to a distant coastline. There he comes to the surface in a city; he looks like a beggar. He walks to the mosque and there he finds, standing in front of the mosque, a woman who is awaiting the first man who comes along—for a law or a vote obliges her to give herself as wife to precisely that man. She leads the foreigner to the baths and then, dressed in the finest vestments for the banquet, she accompanies him to the wedding. He devotes himself to sharing the fate of this lady, he fathers children by her, he acquires houses, gardens, and slaves, and over the years rises to the highest positions and honors. His luck does not last, however; he is implicated in dangerous conspiracies, cast into captivity, and condemned to death. He comes to the scaffold; the executioner puts the rope around his neck and hoists him up. He hears a roaring sound, like the rumor of the waves crashing on the shore, then the rope breaks his neck. When he raises his head, he realizes that it was not the sound of the sea that he heard, but the sound of the water in the cup the magician is holding, where he had actually been submerged for only an instant.

The great lords were not always pleased by their sojourns in the world of dreams. One of them, an Egyptian sultan, I think, was even so enraged by his imaginary torments that he ordered the magician to be beheaded. As De Quincey, above all, experienced it, the “sting of time”.

As it turned out, the magician was almost always rewarded with ingratitude. One can observe this in the demonstrations staged by hypnotists: when the spellbound persons snap out of their trances, they glare angrily at the hypnotist. The students who were tricked at Auerbach’s Cellar were no different: “‘Tis magic! Strike—The knave is outlawed!”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See Goethe, *Faust*, Scene V, “Auerbach’s Cellar in Leipzig”.

I reached out and opened the book. The bitter part of the day had passed. How could people have put up with it, before there were books? The sultan lowered his head—I saw the magician smile, I saw the stupid astonishment on the faces of the assembled swordsmen. They had their hands on the hilts of their scimitars, except for one, who was holding the turban of the sultan. Then I heard the roar of the sea and I began my pilgrimage through its depths.

The images were powerful and direct: they were not mediated by reflection. Up until then they had glittered like light from a mirror—now I saw the same light, but up close. Before, I had read the text in a good translation; now I heard it recited in its original language. I was no longer a reader. The tale revealed a depth that I had never even suspected. It had made the sea and its monotony accessible. Whoever heard it, whoever felt its waves wash over him, no longer needed the text, he could dispense with the letters of the alphabet.

I set the book aside; I was breathing faster, with a great feeling of pleasure. Every breath was a joy; I was conscious of this pleasure. I felt it as a light touch in my diaphragm. This touch was rhythmic, it was like the movement of a pendulum that touched me very softly, it caressed me and then was lost at the distant point of a long oscillation. It returned and brushed me again, a little more deeply and delicately. I continued on my pilgrimage on the bottom of the sea, and I heard its murmur; it was a rich and pleasant sound. The pendulum went back and forth; its impetus was increasing. Now, I ascended along with the pendulum; one of its components had broken away from the *physis*. I rose with the bob of the pendulum as if on the gondola of an amusement park ride; it had the form of a half moon. The keel was as sharp as the blade of a knife, it hardly grazed my skin. It was the air current that was caressing it. My sensitivity increased when the swinging pendulum was on its way up—at its high point I was seized by vertigo. All of this forced me to laugh compulsively, then I came back down whistling. The motion was unstoppable and uncontrollable; it reached a point where I was afraid I was going to fall.

Serenity was followed by intense pleasure, then came qualms, and then anxiety, almost without any transition. After reaching its high point, the pendulum began to oscillate in the opposite direction. It is as if children were playing with a small fire and were amusing themselves with the flames, until, hissing and crackling, it reached the crown of the trees. Then they run away, terrified. The fire spreads in the blink of an eye.

Our sensitivity has its limits. When we cross a particular threshold, perception becomes paradoxical, as if contact with congealed objects causes blisters like those caused by fire. Extreme pains can be transmuted into pleasure, as in the execution of Damians. Likewise, pleasure can become too intense. Then it is manifested as a theft from nature; the situation reverses in an instant.

Anxiety did not gradually creep up on me; it supervened with all its violence. The swing of the gondola did not slow down, but moved as if it had reversed directions. I jumped up, looked at myself in the mirror and did not recognize myself. That face there, pallid,

distorted in a sneer, was stronger than mine, and was hostile towards me. It was up to something wicked; I could not look away from it.

I must have ingested too strong a dose. Maybe a lethal dose. Above all, it was necessary to remain calm and not wake up my mother. The substance must disappear; the jar was still on the table. I quickly opened the window and threw it out; it landed in a snow bank. Then, it would be advisable to drink as much water as I possibly could, to induce vomiting; I could not allow myself to be overcome by madness.

The anxiety increased, however; I could not bear to be closed up in that room for much longer. The hallway was dimly lit; I walked down the hall, opening doors as quickly as possible. In one room, two men were sitting, counting money, and, stunned by my intrusion, they immediately stood up. In the next room, a lady was squatting over the bidet; her husband waved his fist at me. Downstairs, in the lobby, there was still a crowd of people; I rushed forward, running barefoot and with my pajamas unbuttoned, among the crowd, bumping into them and tripping over their suitcases.

“You can’t do that here, sir”, the young bellhop shouted; I was already on my way back up the stairs.irate guests were coming down the stairs; the ones whose privacy I had violated.

There was nothing else I could do; I felt that I had to wake up my mother, since I was no longer capable of dealing with the situation. She was still awake, reading in bed, as had been her custom since she was a child. It was not the first time that I made her worry; but this must have been the last straw. She stared at me as if in a dream, my condition and my face were reflected in her look. Then the bellhop came in; I heard my mother saying in a low voice, “He suddenly felt indisposed ... nervous agitation ... telephone ... call the doctor”. Then she came to my side, while I, in a state of growing anxiety, could not stop writhing on the bed.

The doctor arrived a few minutes later; undoubtedly, he lived in the vicinity and often made house calls for patients at the hotel. Hotels are microcosms of society, stations along the road of life and its trials. Furthermore, one’s health is in peril on journeys. Every kind of case, from indigestion to suicide, is an emergency here, and the hotel desk clerk needs a first class doctor who will respond to calls without delay. This doctor was around sixty years old; he was corpulent, with loose folds of skin; the light gleamed on his balding head. He came without a coat, either because he only lived across the street or because he left it in the lobby. He was breathing heavily, undoubtedly because he had walked up the stairs, and except for this particular detail, his presence radiated tranquility, while the bellhop who was looking over his shoulder through the half-open door displayed a look that was somewhere between curious and horrified. I saw the doctor’s white skull approach me under the light, and lower down on his bald head I saw the two lenses of dark eyeglasses; they must have been almost perfectly circular.

“You want to tell me everything about this: now you are trying to be careful not to reveal your secret. That could prove fatal.”

Even today I wonder just what kind of fatality he was talking about. He was, certainly, the approach of a power that represented order, with its morality and common sense. In this sense, every encounter between the sick person and the doctor conceals, to a greater or lesser extent, a certain hostility, and in cases like this it comes to the surface. They are border skirmishes.

The white skull with dark eyes approached slowly, and leaned over me. Next to the bed there was a reading lamp on a small table; the doctor took hold of it and shined its light on my face. It was unpleasant. I saw how the bellhop's mouth suddenly opened. Then the doctor began the interrogation: "Have you ingested anything? A medicine or some other substance?"

At the same time, he carefully looked all around the room. But the jar with the green paste was outside in the slush. I had to take off my jacket; my mother helped me. The doctor examined my arms, and put his hands on my chest. He palpitated my stomach. "Did you drink or perhaps eat anything?"

This question brought back to me the memory of the Leipzig train station, and the carp *à la polonaise*. That was my scapegoat: I would shift the blame onto the fish. A good idea, and better yet, I was not the one who suggested it. I only said, "Nothing since today around noon". This set the stage for my mother's answer: "It must have been the carp." The doctor nodded his head: although he might not be convinced, at least he accepted it as a hypothesis. Despite my attempt to restrain myself, I could not help but smile. The doctor then put some dark powder in a glass and asked the bellhop to bring some strong coffee. The bellhop disappeared into the kitchen and returned in a little while with a serving tray.

The doctor had chosen the right remedy; already the first swallow was like a soothing balm that spread softly through my soul. The tension was relaxed just as suddenly as it had arrived, and along with it that strange mixture of wild frenzy and anxiety. In its place, serenity spread. It was more than beneficial; it was a profound pleasure of existence. Real happiness is without reason; it comes like a wave that catches us by surprise. We are unaware of its causes. Perhaps, far from the hotel, a meteor plunged into the sea. Perhaps it was only a favorable conjunction of the stars; it is the kind of happiness that is becoming increasingly more rare.

My mother could now breathe easy; she could not believe her eyes. The misfortune had passed, like a dream whose meaning is not revealed until you awaken. Even the doctor was satisfied; the case had caused less inconvenience than he had at first expected; he did not waste any time with unnecessary talk.

In addition, some of the other guests had gathered outside the room, unbidden, out of curiosity, and now they, too, joined in the atmosphere of good cheer. Even the man who had shaken his fist at me was there, a small fat man in a tee shirt. He said to my mother: "It's not at all odd that he should lose his nerve in such a condition."

A favorable atmosphere; among the group that had gathered temporarily in that sparsely-furnished room and who now dispersed, I only saw friendly faces. I felt lucky, myself; there has to be something in us that acts directly on the environment, which then takes the form of an echo or reflected image. This is valid for both good and bad occasions, for both the crests and the troughs in the waves of life: our mothers are the only persons who will never let us down.

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On Christmas and New Year's Day I often visited my parents, whenever I could. On Saint Sylvester's Day we dined on carp, as is the custom in many families. Since time immemorial, this animal has risen with the wave of life, as the bearer of good luck, for the ushering in of the New Year. In that region, it was served as "blue carp", with a sprig of parsley in its open mouth, and garnished with lemon slices. An image full of color: the red roe, the melted butter and the *raifort* with cream also made their contributions.

The fish, which came from the lakes of Bohemia, got bigger with the passage of the years, and we had to extend the table after the grandchildren were born. Friedrich Georg, who had for many years sat across from my father, was gradually moved farther and farther away from him. The old man contemplated the big table with satisfaction. As a self-declared positivist he did not hold the beyond in high esteem, but he did believe "that we survive in our children".

While everyone was gazing at the fish with delight, our mother warned us to watch out for bones; and she did not forget to point out that this fish had still been alive and wagging his tail only that very morning. "For", she added, "when it comes to fish poisoning, I have already had enough of that for the last time in Halle. Ernst can tell us something about that, can't you?"

"Yes, what an unpleasant story", I usually answered, and could not avoid blushing a little.

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I reaped compassion where I least deserved it. In this connection, I would at least like to mention the astounding expenditure of cleverness of which one is capable, when a great disorder seizes control of one's head. Undoubtedly, this cleverness is rooted in a deeper layer than our intellect. It can be manifested by putting itself at the service of the intellect, or by overruling the intellect in an instinctive way, more or less like a chameleon. This strange animal does not choose its camouflage coloring the way a painter would; but by reacting directly to the light. His skin harbors a grid as sensitive as a very fine-grained photographic film. But it surpasses film, since it also conceals a trick. Behind everything that is automatic, this trick lives, which refines it to an incredible degree, but which can also live without it.

## *To have disposal over and to judge*<sup>81</sup>

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How is it that a failure, a mistake, or a debt afflicts us for such a long time and we never completely liquidate it? The feeling of being in debt to my mother has tormented me since the incident in Halle. This anxiety is a specific, almost Tantalus-like, torture. It is always possible to put an end to resentment produced by a misfortune, as it is possible to put an end to the pain caused by an insult, even a serious one; time heals these wounds. However, why does the memory of an injustice, which weighs upon our “own” conscience, torment us for so long and so disastrously? They are not scars; they are the edges of an open wound, and the memory accompanies us, it goes back to our first year at school.

It seems as if there is a judge in our conscience; yes, there is a judge “in us”. This jurisdiction has nothing to do with morality, nor does it have anything to do with rights or the law; that would be too simple. Nor is it just about expiation. The Fathers of the Church shed much half-light on this domain. If it was just about expiation, then this judge would have to fall silent once “the debt is paid”; but that is not what happens. We can leave the prison, or the brig, after ten or twenty years and nonetheless never cease to be tried by this internal court. We might even believe that we human beings have condemned ourselves unjustly—this changes little or nothing.

The judge does not pronounce the final sentence—it is each person who casts his own shadow over himself. Among the great criminal trials of our century, the case of the lawyer, Hau, demonstrates this in a special way, for, after he was released from prison he committed suicide. Even the stubborn denial of guilt, maintained right up to the end, is not directed so much at the world as at the image of our own conscience, which maintains a merciless silence. “Thus must you be, from self there is no remission.” In this venue you cannot win an appeal to declare a mistrial. We are treading on terrain where things become serious and inevitable, like death. Justice remains elsewhere, where a complete silence reigns—as it was in the time of Socrates, and so it is today when justice is increasingly more obviously patterned on the traffic code.

What importance does this internal judge have, which has such a minor relation with “crime and punishment”? By the way, Raskolnikov could have beaten the prosecutor at his own game, but he could not escape his own conscience. Raskolnikov did not owe his

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<sup>81</sup> *Fügen und richten*. *Fügen*, that is, “to dispose of”, in the dual sense of “to arrange”, to establish a “disposition”; and “to make use” of something over which one has power. Hence, Napoleon would be—to use Jünger’s terminology—a *disponierende Geist*, literally, a “spirit that disposes”, who dictates, that is, a dictator, a *Machthaber*. In this epigraph, Jünger is playing with the various meanings of the verb, *fügen*, which in its reflexive form denotes submission or resignation; with respect to, for example, the will of God, the dispositions of Providence or before any chance of fortune, fate or the unfolding of events.

defeat to a logical error, but to a fracture in his substance. Hence the abject nature of the crime committed “with an axe”; Napoleon, whom he believed he was imitating, would never have thought of such a thing even in his wildest dreams.

Before this Court, the seriousness of the crime does not enter into consideration. The ease with which dictators brush off their qualms of conscience, even when they are responsible for vast destruction, is shocking;<sup>82</sup> Napoleon did not feel any guilt when, on his deathbed, he murmured these words: “tête d’armée”. Nonetheless, the spirit that disposes also suffers, undoubtedly, as bitterly or more bitterly than any other. It is just that he is aware of his failure in a different way.

We have to consider this manner of judgment in a more simple and general way, as a will to have disposal over something, whose tragedy consists in the fact that it cannot rectify fate. Speaking in biological terms, we expect to modify phenomena, and this is more or less practicable, while the genotype perseveres inalterably in its essence. There is no pardon; all absolution, all punishment, are only symbolic acts.

What is this anxiety, this unease, responding to, which no critical consciousness, no prosecutor, is capable of provoking on such a deep level, or with such bitter remorse? We are not capable of producing it, we are not capable of reestablishing the image. But what does it mean, “to reestablish”? This image has never existed, it has been incorporated into us with its fractures and its fissures. We do not establish any equivalence between “it is necessary” and “it is advisable” that would be like that. The exemplary model recedes more than any other from this equivalence. However, the world strives ever more diligently to adapt to this model.

Nonetheless, this internal judge persists, and he knows nothing of forgiveness. He accepts neither repentance nor a good conscience.

The distinctive feature of great problems is the fact that they are not susceptible to resolution. Their value resides in the incessant questioning which in vain calls for a response, and in inextinguishable unease. In the North I have seen masses of logs descend with the current of the river, forming a tangle of tree trunks. At first they move slowly

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<sup>82</sup> Jünger speaks literally of a “strong consumption” (*einen starken Konsum*); this expression would seem to be a translation into German of certain words spoken by Napoleon, as they were already cited in *The Adventurous Heart* (1929/1938): “The attitude of this commander, who sees the change taking place behind the burning, has always struck me as a sign of a healthy life that does not shy away from a bloody incision. It is concentrated, with all the classical conciseness that so irritated Chateaubriand, in *consomption forte*, strong consumption [*starke Verzeehr*], a phrase that Napoleon occasionally muttered during battles at those idle moments for him when all the reserves were on the march, whilst the front withered under the attacks of cavalry squadrons and the fire of advancing artillery, as under a surf of steel and flame” [Ernst Jünger, *The Adventurous Heart: Figures and Capriccios*, tr. Thomas Frieze, Telos Press, Candor, N.Y., 2012, p.42].

and as they approach the rapids, more quickly. At the same time, they revolve on their axes and submit to the rhythm of the current as if they were controlled by a magnet. In many places, a lumberjack helps them along.

This is something that is repeated in the tangle of branches and roots of the tree of life, in the lines of the hand, in the chromosomes of the cell's nucleus, in the fate of the individual. That which does not submit, will be forced to yield.

## ***On hashish***

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Before proceeding, we should undertake a general review. This is what many proverbs recommend, many of them venerable sayings. In this respect, the tried and true maxim, "Once burned, twice shy", also applies. When we get a black eye, we learn something that, perhaps, can be useful for others.

While it is advisable to recommend prudence with respect to *all* drugs, it seems that with hashish it is necessary to recommend extra caution, for it causes unpredictable and, in part, violent, reactions. Two or three grams of the extract should suffice, in Lewin's view, to induce a state of ecstatic intoxication; with the right preparations, even a fraction of that quantity should be enough. He explicitly mentions an infusion of *moka* as an antidote.

What happens when a person takes an overdose is unpredictable; in any case, we have taken the risk of engaging in an adventure that might turn out badly.

The name of the plant, *cannabis*, has origins and relatives in very ancient languages, such as Assyrian; the Greek word, *konabos*, means "ringing, clashing, din". It refers to the throes of not only happiness but also aggression and excitation, which are often manifested in hashish intoxication. Some examples are found in *The Thousand and One Nights*. When the Caliph is making his rounds with the Vizier in the evening, he hears laughter, orders and threats, coming from a hut. They enter and find a hashish eater who is enjoying himself in solitude and who is himself the target of his own jibes. In a public bath, another hashish eater suffers an eruption of hallucinations, which in part horrify him, and in part amuse him.

Likewise, the story attributes other affects that are purely narcotic to the drug, mentioned under the name of *bhang* or *benj*. It is used to anesthetize victims who are targeted for elimination. Thus, in the story of the slave, Ghaním, who is bewitched by love, his female owner Zubeydeh makes a slave girl, who is a threat to become her rival, drink *bhang* or *benj*, as it is related in the translation that I have before me. It was, as the narrator says, "a round piece of *benj*, of such potency that if an elephant smelt it he would sleep from one night to another".



Sudden narcosis can therefore be caused by a strong dose, and anxiety never even gets a chance to develop. Furthermore, the drug unleashes a wide range of reactions, depending on the temperaments of its users, giving rise to either exhilaration or somnolence. The two states sprout, like the thorn and the rose, from the same root, and may be observed in the behavior of any conclave of users. We must also keep in mind that the same dose might be a stimulant today and a depressant tomorrow. The result is uncertain, and the risk increases as the dose increases. This is why the kind of intoxication that, like the *blót*, is intended to conjure magical forces, is preceded by a stage of waiting, anxiety and worry that can intensify until the door to the sensations of annihilation is opened.

Perhaps it is an aspect of the nature of hashish that it erupts from and violently seizes upon a particular geographic region. The history of the Eastern countries is rich in chronicles that describe such eruptions, and it is also rich in accounts of the draconian punishments with which the State attempts to erect a bulwark against them. It is a notorious fact that, for some time now, in North America and Europe cannabis consumption is becoming more and more widespread, especially as a drug that is smoked. The result is a particular form of communitarian life, and also of criminality. It is not yet possible to foresee the eventual scope and meaning of this phenomenon.

Compared to this new trend, the initiations celebrated more than one hundred years ago by a handful of Parisian literati have left only sparse vestiges behind them. They did not go beyond the experimental phase and they would have fallen victim, like so many other fashions, to oblivion, if Baudelaire had not created a monument to them in his *Artificial Paradises*. It is true, of course, that in every fashion a deep current flows that, although it is often hard to recognize, rises as froth on the surface of everyday life. This helps to explain, by the way, the comical effect that fashions often arouse, which is not just the product of their being unusual, but also of their aspect as a herald that rises up from the depths. This is why the object of fashion, after momentary stupefaction, is eagerly adopted.

Hashish responds better to the critique of culture and to the cultural ennui of dandyism than opium. From a metaphysical perspective, it leads to a shallower stratum; nor does it separate itself from society, although it distances itself from it.

The *habitués* of the Hotel Pimodan were more often under the effect of stimulants than drunk from alcohol; for this purpose, all that was needed was a tiny piece of hashish paste. In this state, they could walk the streets, go to dinner or go to the theater. One may think of the effect of an intensification of the habit of smoking that, besides, did not take long to take root so deeply as to captivate the smoker—the smoker had, as Baudelaire says, the sensation of “being inhaled by the pipe”. Reversals of perspective like this, of a strange precision, which describe the growing intensity of the ecstatic state, abound in his study on hashish. Music is conceived as an mathematical operation, which is why the notes are transposed into numbers, although they retain their sensual and voluptuous character. Something similar takes place with grammar: the substantive marches solemnly through the sentence like a king, which the adjective covers with a transparent veil, while the verb enters on the scene as a winged angel.

In the theater, the stage, with its characters and its action, seems infinitely small; everything is more distant, but defined by a more distinct border, it serves at the same time as a springboard to fly towards the realm of dreams, without either the continuity or the logic of the work suffering from any alterations as a result; to the contrary, the absences introduce new subtleties.

Parisian dandyism is more cultivated than that of Brummel, who did not feel the need to possess artistic reserves or, much less, literary reserves. What they have in common is the suspension of relations with the environment, and this harmonizes with the states of mind induced by hashish. Many stimulants that modify the circulation of the blood cause a sensation of cold, which is bothersome, but Baudelaire was fascinated by the idea that he possessed the privilege of enjoying a feeling of coolness in the middle of the summer, when he attended the theater. There, he saw the actors and the spectators as Lilliputians, as if he was viewing them through a gigantic telescope, but from the wrong end.

Under the influence of hashish, perception and sensitivity become more acute in such a way as to produce anxiety. One of the guests felt, at first, enraptured by the power of beauty, but later he was horrified to think of what would become of his mind and his organs if his nerves were to continue to undergo such refinement. He could not, however, stop this process of refinement; ecstatic intoxication dragged him like a runaway horse that is heading for the cliff. In this respect, Baudelaire mentions the fact that hashish can sometimes, without any obvious cause, induce a more violent effect than usual. For all these reasons, one gets the impression that no approach has been consummated here. This form of ecstatic intoxication is merely one of the stations along the road towards the zero point, a temporary shelter, a multicolor tent that is set up just for one night.

In our surroundings a great desolation prevails, its inventions possess the inherent property of abetting the vile proposal to “limit human freedom and indispensable pain”—this observation is related to a commentary on chloroform.<sup>83</sup>

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The small chunk of hashish is like the tent that Peri Banu presented as a gift to Prince Ahmed. He found that when it was folded up, it fit into a nutshell, but when it was unfolded, it could shelter an army. Its fabric was made of air. The small Parisian cliques abandoned themselves under this tent to either extravagant pleasures or to esthetic

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<sup>83</sup> This relates to the following anecdote: “It was not without a certain admiration that I once listened to an army officer’s paradoxical story. A French general had undergone a cruel operation at El-Aghouat, and died during it, despite the use of chloroform. This general was a very brave man and, what is more, someone to whom the term *chivalrous* naturally applied. ‘It wasn’t the chloroform that was needed, but the presence of his troops and the delightful sounds of the military band. With that, he might have been saved!’ The surgeon was not of the same opinion; but the chaplain would certainly have applauded those sentiments.” Charles Baudelaire, *Artificial Paradises*.

pleasures. If the ecstatic intoxication proceeded favorably, things glowed as if they were covered with fine shellac; they were impregnated with beauty. The prerequisite is a spiritual power that knows how to transmit this beauty to the environment. A breeder of oxen, so it says more or less in *Artificial Paradises*, only dreams of cattle destined for the slaughterhouse.

The visions induced by hashish are therefore related to an exaltation and refinement of the imagination, rather than with the supervision of something external. This is already suggested by the title of the book. Baudelaire concludes, in part from conviction, in part from prudence, with the fundamental objection that he raises against drugs: that it is a detour of the human being to trust to pharmacists and alchemists, when he wants to attain to paradise. As authentic and venerable paths to paradise, he mentions fasting, prayer and labor, and also the “noble dance”. These are the same methods that Goethe proposes in the “Treasure Digger”, after having warned against “vain magic”.<sup>84</sup> The poem is splendid up to where it says, “dig no longer fruitlessly”; the great prophet reaches his limit at this point. Ever since I first heard these verses, which my mother recited to us in a dramatic voice, I never liked their morality at all. One never digs fruitlessly when one digs deep enough. Wherever we introduce the shovel, we touch points that are equidistant from the center. Every step leads us closer to the goal; even when it is a step backwards.

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Since then a lot has changed, and not only in the visible world. The transformation of visible things follows thoughts, which are invisible. Nor do thoughts lack their antecedents: they “come from the heart”, as Vauvenargues says.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Jünger is probably quoting the verses of this ballad from memory, since Goethe warns not against “vain” (*müßig*), but “frightful”, magic (*ängstliche Beschwörung*): “‘Pure life’s courage drink!’ cried he: / ‘This advice to prize then learn— / Never to this place return / Trusting in thy spells [absurd]; / Dig no longer fruitlessly’ ....” Goethe, *The Poems of Goethe*, tr. Edgar Alfred Bowring, John W. Parker and Son, London, 1853, p. 159. [The English translation by Bowring has “spells absurd” instead of “frightful magic”—American translator’s note.]

<sup>85</sup> The *Réflexions et maxims* of the Marquise de Vauvenargues were a source of inspiration for both Schopenhauer as well as Nietzsche. In *Autor und Autorschaft*, Jünger dedicates an interesting comment to this aphorism: “Are thoughts born from the brain? Vauvenargues is of the opinion that they sprout from the heart; this is more correct. Since his time the heart has been degraded to a mere muscle. But Vauvenargues was not thinking of it as a muscle; he conceived of it, just as the ancients did, as the center of the vital force. That is where thoughts come from; the brain plays the role of a transformer: it registers, elaborates and stores inspirations.... A primitive example: Vauvenargues assumed that great thoughts ascend from the depths without words and that, perhaps with some loss, they are transformed. We get a glimpse of this in poetry, song, and prayer”. Ernst Jünger, *El autor y la escritura* [originally published under the title *Autor und Autorschaft* in 1984—American translator’s note] tr. Ramón Alcalde, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1987, p. 195.

Of the classic means recommended to attain participation in the spiritual world, all that really remains is work, while prayer retains less and less of its persuasiveness, and the “noble dance”, that is, the perfected work of art, is increasingly more rare.

According to Nietzsche’s verdict, anyone who chatters about paradise renders himself suspect as someone who is not of this world. In his view, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the priest would occupy a rank “even lower than the pariah”. Some symptoms were already apparent even then.

The demand for faith is increasingly taking on the form of a gymnastic exercise, when it does not simply fall *par terre*. It consists of discussions in houses whose cornerstones have been fractured. Then it is better to descend to the basement.

When the access routes to paradise have become artificial, or have been hermetically sealed, then the expression “artificial paradises” also loses its meaning. They become more genuine than those passed down by tradition, that is: matter acquires more force than the idea. This is a logical conclusion that is not without practical consequences. Here, we are offered something more than a simple demand; even where the shovel only scrapes bedrock, it will not be unfruitful; perhaps it will even obtain some profit.

In this respect, the situation from which we start has changed since the times of Baudelaire: behind spiritual curiosity and a certain kind of boredom, which, to speak truly, is already itself a sign, a preemptory necessity is announced—a hunger that cannot be satisfied with bread alone and which is concealed behind a large number of manifestations of contemporary unrest, and also behind its excesses.

On both sides of the zero point, determined by Nietzsche’s verdict, it is advisable to redistribute the emphases. This only changes the attribution of weights, the rising and falling rhythm of their oscillations. What is lost with regard to ideas is gained with regard to material. Language can only follow this tendency. Reflection cannot engender weight; it only verifies its redistribution.

Words follow, after a certain delay, the constellations; this also applies to events. If there are no more wars, then there can be no peace, either, in the ancient sense of the term; and there cannot be any “artificial paradises” where paradise has become illusory. One of the best interpreters of our world, Aldous Huxley, recognized this, and derived both contradiction and serenity from it, as was inevitable. I do not know to what extent it would be possible for me in the following considerations to accept the validity of his thesis; this is not very important, anyway. But its value as a symptom must be emphasized. Huxley and Baudelaire devoted themselves to the same theme, but the reflections of the one and the other were situated on this side and the other side of the line, respectively. Both are artists, but the distribution of their centers of gravity, esthetic or scientific, are differentiated in a way that one can recognize in each encounter with their respective epochs. The zero point is also the point of crystallization, and despite the fact that the atoms preserve their weights, their arrangements are modified. With this,

what we recognize as beautiful can also be transformed: the “heart of nature” remains intact. Beauty is only a sign of approach, a signal. This explains changes in style.

## Transitions

### *The Marriage of Figaro*

#### 201

Anxiety in the universal desert, alone in the glacial cold of the world. The neutralization of chromatic differences in white, extinction, monotony, necrosis. This is total abandonment.

Everything must perish, there cannot be any beginning, history or sequence of styles. The drumbeat of the shaman, our attention directed towards distant space, beyond Sirius, monotony. The surroundings must remain uniform, if they must be apprehended, all at once, in a unified whole. The journey descends towards the undifferentiated depths.

Monotony, even that of our epoch with its combination of technology and egalitarianism, conforms with the spirit of this journey, it prepares for approach. From the very start it is necessary for it to be present as distance and then as upheaval and waiting.

It is often difficult, and even impossible, to distinguish between ascending and descending forces. This difficulty becomes particularly perceptible as one nears the zero point, when one attempts to formulate a judgment on the cycles of forms, on both this side and the other side of the line traced by nihilism. To become aware of a cycle of forms does not mean to oppose some qualities to others. Values do not determine the origin: they are the end. Fate is anonymous and colorless, a grey spider web.

Stylistic transformation: that is, axiological, qualitative modification. The image undergoes metamorphoses by way of models. One master takes over from another and one school takes over from another. This leads, over the course of centuries, to a great change, but the genesis is always demonstrable.

However, just as fate pulses in history, it is necessary for art to contain a strange element that is not based on the “power to make”, but on displacements of being. This element is only comparable to itself, as is the case with volcanoes, which, although they are undoubtedly similar to other mountains, nonetheless form a category apart.

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It is necessary to express this problem more precisely. A small volcano, even a *solfatara*, is connected with its kind through a nexus that is different than the one that connects it with other mountains and mountain ranges. This does not mean that volcanic forces are

not at work in the latter, or even that they might not someday erupt. In this sense we only observe indirectly what we observe directly, even today, in volcanoes.

There are analogous differences in historical events. When Moses came from the Tabernacle and when Paul was struck blind on the road to Damascus, they did not participate in historic events, or even temporal ones. Nevertheless, something happened that took place on the stage of time, and continues to have its repercussions on it. Thus, just as telluric fire exists everywhere, and not only in volcanoes, so, too, is there a non-temporal element in time. It constitutes the object of a singular desire, a nostalgia, unique to our era, where everything must be transformed in time.

Art also has its own history and, consequently, its own time. However, there is something different, a volcanic force, concealed within it, a primitive matter, that works under the activity of configuration. It lives in all art, just as telluric fire, more or less present, works in mountain chains. Its immediate emanations, however, are subject to another law. As in the last days of Pompey, they supervene unexpectedly; their rhythm is not known.

Wherever such forces erupt, the generative activity of forms must suffer; it cannot be otherwise. This explains certain disputes that, in our time of transition, extend their impact and redouble their acrimony. In the usual scandals of the salon or the theater the dilemma is posed as to whether it is advisable to change the decorations or to incorporate a new wing into the building. Circumstances are different when the house is beginning to shake and tremble on its foundations. In this case, it is no longer a matter of new forms that are striving to be manifested; it is formless power itself that is clearing the way for its own advent. The restlessness that is then born far surpasses the boundaries of art. Its scope, and therefore, its penetration into the social, political and ethical fields, is as obvious as it is difficult to judge the depth of its epicenter. We approach geological strata where even the premises for the construction of judgments melt: thus, noble and base, high and low, right and left, old and new. Thus, norms are also set in motion: good and evil, righteous and unjust, beautiful and ugly, in the ecclesiastical, juridical and esthetic realms. Pretensions still preserve their legitimacy for a while, although they lack guarantees. The crust that separates us from the magma becomes thinner. Nietzsche already quite preciously perceived this: "Where I go, soon no one else will be able to go."

Volcanism is unmistakable. Its symptoms, however, the birth pains that announce its advent, are hard to discern. How can volcanic symptoms be distinguished from normal geological movements? There are certainly transitions, borderline cases, not to speak of those phases in which time acts on its own or "the dew settles on the plant, when the night is deepest". Similarly, things that seem normal in their time, when contemplated retrospectively, acquire prophetic significance. Only the Three Wise Men beheld the Star of Bethlehem in its true splendor.

Therefore, how do we distinguish the entry into a new decade, or even a new century, from the entry into a new constellation, a new house, in the astrological sense?<sup>86</sup> This involves a process of dissolution of stylistic qualities and sequences. New frames of reference arise—not within the already-established systems, but as the constitutive beginnings of systems. The emperor will kiss the bishop's feet.

All of this does not erupt, by any means, as we have said, like a volcanic eruption. Volcanic substances are concealed in the sand and in the rocks, just like radioactive isotopes; material substances that have the same aspect, but different effects. In particular, in the two kinds of light that separate the dawn from the dusk, everything takes on a twilight tone.

This is one of the reasons why the historian cannot spare himself archival work. It is necessary for him to have seen the microscopic focus, and to have examined the places where it begins to crack. This knowledge is indispensable, even when the details do not appear in the final work. The latter must comprehend the time. Thus, the geologist can infer the existence of a landslide of mountain chains on the basis of a piece of rock, evidence that he will later discard.

It seems that, if we compare them with the methods of the natural sciences, the historical sciences lack scientific instruments. Lumber that is beginning to break may emit such a cracking sound. Such splitting can herald a fire; phenomena of this kind belong to the order of the plausible. Like the sparks thrown off by a fuse, it can also precede an explosion. This corresponds with the system. What is most disturbing, however, is the crack that reveals something more than the alteration of a frame, due to old age or fire. Now the curtain that conceals the blaze is torn. It is no longer a matter of this or that particular phenomenon, nor is it about naked existence. The threat looms over a being that *embraces* life and death. The stars become cold; a universal anxiety looms over the cosmic desert.

## 203

On September 26, 1783, *The Marriage of Figaro* was performed in Gennevilliers. It was a private performance before three hundred people, the flower of the *Ancien régime* who, as Sainte-Beuve says, met “to applaud that which would destroy them”.

The uproar that it caused was unprecedented; Beaumarchais ran about like a madman, and, when someone complained about the heat, he broke all the windows with his walking stick. On April 27, 1784, when it was once again allowed to be performed, the

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<sup>86</sup> A question that orients the work of Jünger increasingly more explicitly from *At the Wall of Time* to *The Scissors*, and whose starting point was a 1957 text entitled *Measurable Time and the Time of Fate. Reflections of a Layman on Astrological Questions*. This text addresses the crucial distinction between historical transition and meta-historical transition, between history and post-history, without which the gnostic philosophy of *Approaches* cannot be understood.

fuse was lit; it was performed in Paris. Not everyone approved of it. La Harpe, who would later enthusiastically join the Revolution, until Robespierre ordered his imprisonment, criticized it: "One can easily understand the pleasure and the joy of a public that is enchanted with amusing itself at the expense of authority, which consents, in person, to our making fun of it on the stage". And Napoleon later said concerning *Figaro* that "it was the Revolution in progress".

This is an example of a theatrical scandal. The genre goes back to antiquity. It exhibits a model of society. It exhorts society to contemplate itself in the mirror. In this case it was not so much the rooster of Socrates as the birds of Aristophanes, which, covered in light feathers, stirred up a commotion. It is true that the voice of the former is still heard. The "stinging whip of satire" is attractive for only an instant. Its "barbed witticisms" do not take long to become blunted, after having blazed like a fireworks. People ask themselves where its disturbing power came from. The air was thick with the smell of gunpowder. In such situations, it was enough to lift up your little finger to already seem like a genius. When all is said and done, laughter does not need any other pretext. It is contagiously intoxicating, like Saint Vitus Dance. The ancient physicians defined sardonic laughter as "a laughter not motivated by the corresponding humor". This is correct; the humor can even be contrary, it may presage disturbing events. Unmotivated hilarity precedes, without any warning to the suitors at the banquet, the bloodbath at the home of Odysseus. This hilarity runs all throughout Cantos XX and XXI. The great adventurer who returns home dodges the bone thrown at him by one of the suitors, ducking his head:

"... smiling grimly Sardinian fashion as he did so, and it hit the wall."

And then, as he effortlessly stretched the bow, like a lyre:

"... he took it in his right hand to prove the string, and it sang sweetly under his touch like the twittering of a swallow. The suitors were dismayed, and turned colour as they heard it; at that moment, moreover, Jove thundered loudly as a sign..."<sup>87</sup>

Almost no one reads Homer anymore, and it is even more rare for him to be subjected to an adequate interpretation. Actually, there are exceptions—I would like to believe that Marcks and Beckmann have studied him with rigor. In any event, you only have to strike this mountain that has been petrified under the work of the philologists a couple of times for the most limpid of waters to burst forth.

Like light, laughter also has its dark side; one does not laugh with impunity. Now and then, history corroborates the warning of Ecclesiastes: "Don't be a fool! Why die before your time?" Chamfort offers an example; nor did Beaumarchais get away unscathed. He who laughs and the object of his laughter are much alike; they complement one another in an almost erotic relation, by which they are intertwined. When a monarch dies, it also constitutes a misfortune for those who have laughed at him at his expense. This only becomes visible from the vantage point of a certain distance: when the epoch as such

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<sup>87</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, Chapters XX and XXI.



enters into one's field of vision. To find something comical one needs to have some relation to it. It is no coincidence that, of all the animals, the monkey is especially comical to human beings.

In these reflections we would do well to take laughter rather than ridicule as a point of departure. The monkey, separated from the human being who makes fun of him by the bars of a cage, is not in himself ridiculous. Laughter, the object of diligent study on the part of clever spirits, has to be examined in isolation. It raises its objects, as the wave raises ships and rafts, and often only just brushes against them. Like a wave in a storm, laughter can also intensify until it becomes intoxicating. Then the fun stops. The ships sink, the object is destroyed. The baker and his wife return with the little baker's apprentice from Varennes.

## 204

The performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* marks a Lesser Transition. A new estate begins to develop; society gives itself a new form. That is, it remains identical in its nucleus; the modification, undoubtedly a major and painful one, is consummated within the system. A Lesser Transition, in this sense, is any change that takes place *within* history, and therefore that is what the French Revolution was, and in general, every revolution is.

Naturally, there has never been a lack of spirits who claim to see within history something different, particularly in an apocalyptic epoch. When Jung-Stilling asked whether the national insignia is the "eye of the animal" that emerges from the depths, this corresponds to its metaphysical necessity, which easily leads, as it does in his meditations on the realm of the spirits, to reckless judgments. For the historian, such aspects are superfluous, even annoying. His work is optimal when it obeys the advice: "Shoemaker, attend to your shoes!" The historian is neither a pessimist nor an astrologer nor a prophet. In this respect, Spengler no longer belongs to that fraternity, despite the fact that his entry on the stage, precisely at that historical moment, was not by chance. The domain of the historian is limited to time and with it to the Lesser Transitions. The field he cultivates is time. Anything that transcends this terrain, for example, metaphysical or theological speculations, can, instead, harm his work. Nietzsche can attend the school of Burckhardt, but the reverse would be implausible.

## 205

On the other hand, we must admit that we are leaving the framework that we have identified with "history" since the time of Herodotus. That is why it is not possible for us to continue our inquiry regarding the situation within the image of the world we have inherited. Nor can we continue to trust the means and the forms, whose legitimacy was never cast into doubt for thousands of years. The fact that war, borders, property and matter should disappear, that the power of the father should disappear: behind all of this a framework of forces is at work that no longer merits the adjective "historical". Something new is taking place within and without history. The fissure is no longer that of a house

that is collapsing, nor is it that of a fire or a conflagration, as many peoples have suffered since ancient times. It must conceal something different from a fire that can be exploited or quenched in the classical way.

## 206

We must avoid an error, that is: the notion that a symbolic representation can transform the course of events. The sinking of the *Titanic* offers, even in its name and in a whole symphony of details, an analogy, an image, a symbol of a particular state of technological and socio-economic development. Something similar is true of the great scandals, the Dreyfus *affaire*, the case of the Royal Jewels and the trial of the Captain of Köpenick. All of them are symbols, models, abbreviations. They may offer an intuitive image, they may also help hasten the process of change, but only within the system and its necessities. If they had not taken place, what was necessary would still have been verified. They are images that can unleash consequences, but less as a cause than as a triggering factor. Sometimes one gets the impression that Clio is playing hopscotch. Thus, the queen has nothing to do with the history of the necklace that weighs so heavily and so decisively on her neck. The burning of the Reichstag is also suspicious. The tide comes with or without warning signs. The astrologer is limited to the symbol that establishes a link between an event and a constellation. They are images for contemplation, not for the will: works of art.

There is an astral substance in things, even when the coordination remains hidden. It is in the lamb, in the stable and in the manger; and precisely for that reason, the star is more than a sign of reference. It acts necessarily; but that it should be seen can depend on chance or on the movement of the clouds.

In this sense, space travel can extend knowledge, but only within the frontiers that the earth concedes to us in its sublimations.

## 207

Just as history has its rules, it can also produce facts that do not conform to those rules. When, for example, as the Bible recounts, the king of a besieged city, in a dire situation, appears on the wall of the city and sacrifices his son, which causes the besieging army to withdraw, then this does not belong to the system of history, although it must be chronologically included in the epoch subsequent to Herodotus. In this respect, as well, the Old Testament is a gold mine of discoveries. Goldberg provides some shocking details in his *Critique of Judaic Doctrines*.

There are circumstances in which a similar event can be ordered in a chronological sequence. Even so, chronology is among the crudest tools of history. The “stone age” extends, in certain remote places, right up to our century, and even, when it comes to questions of spirituality, it may be found in places that are much closer to us.

## 208

Both history and art harbor strange materials, materials that have nothing in common with their legality, and it is even possible that they both violate it.

Art proceeds within the framework of history, which, considered in this context, appears as the history of culture. Both action, as well as the objects of action, receive by its means a different light; they are projected in a lighter medium. Now they appear under a typical, general, abstract, objective form in a concentrated, ideal, romantic or any other way you want to call it. Even where art surpasses its limits, merging with, for example, politics, ethics or religion, it remains within the system. Its unity is unmistakable, both spatially, in countries separated by great distances, as well as temporally, in the succession of styles. Its periods are like the segments of an animal, which can be differentiated, but concerning whose organic articulation there can be no doubt.

In this framework, therefore, the premiere performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* represents a Lesser Transition. The enormous excitement to which it gave rise must not deceive us concerning this fact. It is normal, in the sense that plagues of locusts, earthquakes or eclipses are normal, which recur in accordance with determined cycles, and may even be predictable. The excitement is precisely a sign of the fact that a model is understood totally and universally. Revolutions and Reformations necessarily belong to the course of culture.

## 209

But what happens when the movement leaves the very orbit, and not just a certain period, of history, and history itself becomes questionable? Then, just as politics is incapable of adjusting to the classical means, art cannot create a dependable model, either. With the downfall of the gods, their statues collapse, too.

No one needs to assume responsibility for this collapse; it collapses by itself. Bakunin jumped out of his carriage and took off his frock coat to join the workers he saw who were busy demolishing a house. Léon Bloy had visiting cards printed with the title, “Demolition Expert”. Nietzsche opened the *Twilight of the Idols* with the epigraph, “The hammer speaks”.

Today this is a business opportunity for those who want to loot the rubble. Corpse robbery has become a branch of collective industry; you have to use a lantern to look for people who are not participating in it. Matthew 8:22 offers a word of advice.<sup>88</sup>

The fall must always have its antecedents. However, there is a difference between pushing, according to Nietzsche’s exhortation, what is on the verge of collapse, and pushing what has already collapsed. The totem animal of Nietzsche was the eagle rather than the vulture. It is true that clean-up specialists are also indispensable; even the Brahmins had to admit this. But one can recognize clearly by their odor who belongs to

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<sup>88</sup> Matthew 8:22. “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

the caste of the *vidangeurs*. It can be discerned in the vicinity of the flayers huts. “Un vautour: se nourrissant plutôt de chair morte et de vidange que de chair vivante” (Buffon, *Oiseaux I*, 248).

But this activity also surpasses the domain of necessity. Montaigne observes: “Vous voyez souvent des hommes sains faire un grand vuidange d’extremes sans besoin aucun precedent.”<sup>89</sup>

## 210

Nonetheless, although it has been interpreted without much insight—in Germany, Russia, France, England, and also in America—the crack in the lumber is heard everywhere, wherever the planetary tension is increasing. In Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Bloy, Joseph Conrad, and most precociously, Edgar Allan Poe, and also in Melville, especially in *Benito Cereno*; in all of them a disturbing atmosphere is propagated alongside and below the optimism that was so enthusiastically disseminated at the time: Zola, Walt Whitman, “Salut au monde”, the first radio transmissions, the World’s Fair, the Eiffel Tower.

It is necessary for us to pay heed to the subtlest sounds. The subliminal is not necessarily found outside of the system; it is even normal in old houses. Ghosts and apparitions can also be domesticated, and even rationalized, as the spiritualists did, and as is still being done today by parapsychologists. The subliminal forms part of domestic tranquility. One will look for it in vain under the Eiffel Tower, which is why the idea of taking part in its demolition lacks appeal. The bombings have erased old neighborhoods from the map, and with them more than one ghost, to the benefit of technological constructs.

In such landscapes one can leave the hammer aside—as long as one does not want to use it as a prospector. The rest is the business of the cleanup crews. What is still cracking and splitting apart in these places, heralds something different, it heralds something more than collapse. We have managed to take the first hesitant steps, beyond the threshold of the radioactive era. The latter demands a new toolbox—in the spiritual realm, as well.

## 211

One more note: here one might get the impression that the technological process has influenced our meditations. Thus, the assumption has been formulated that Darwinism has left its mark in *Zarathustra*. This is called building your house from the roof downward; in the beginning was the word. Progress is oriented in accordance with it, independently of whether one works with muscle power or with steam power, with electricity or with radiation. Compared to this, the world of things is fictitious; it evaporates into smoke if it is not always renewed by the word and by poetic creation.

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<sup>89</sup> “You can often see healthy men have a big turn-out of excrement without any prior need....” And the previous quotation: “Vulture: a bird that lives on carrion and rottenness rather than fresh meat” (Buffon, *Birds*, I, 284).

Now, too, important efforts are dedicated to the return to the word, to the sounding of strata that are fused in the magma.

The atom, for example, demonstrates activity, but lacks reality. In which the following universal truth is reflected, that is: abstractions do not reach the absolute. The Tower of Babel is based on fiction. No one will be convinced of this who has not understood that the very basis of abstraction, the numerical series, itself represents the most prodigious abstraction, a universal key fabricated by all cultures. But nothing more than a key.

## 212

Let us return, however, to the premiere performance of *Figaro*. This play heralded, as we said, a Lesser Transition. And nonetheless, when Beaumarchais smashed the windows, a wave of fresh air entered the theater. The room was still crowded, it was hard to breathe, and this feeling would spread: the Bastille, the guillotine, the Pont d'Arcole, the pyramids, the burning of Moscow, Waterloo. Few centuries have begun with such an impulse.

Universal history is still in its swaddling clothes, if it is compared to the cycles of geological history and of the cosmos. The influence of astrological signs, the macrocosmic style of astrology, becomes particularly persuasive on the scale of the major periods. But we only attend to the idea of a few influences that, to speak truly, become more constrictive the more deeply we plunge into them: Taurus, Aries, Pisces, and now Aquarius, whose Age is now announced. They are unique experiences—we only know one part of the signs of the Zodiac, and none of them has yet been repeated.

We undoubtedly know the course of smaller and really more human unities, which we call cultures and which Spengler ordered into a system. For many reasons, meanwhile, there is a growing suspicion that precisely our culture is not adjusting to this schema, since it has departed from its cyclic orbit. Which could also be a consequence of a millennial acceleration.

By this I do not mean to say that this movement, which fills us with enthusiasm at the same time that it terrifies us, does not obey a cycle, and that it is tending towards the unknown in a straight line of progress. There is probably no movement in the universe that does not revolve around a central point. This was the theological conviction with which mechanical and astronomical, dynamic and static, models of the universe could also be reconciled. Linear progress, however, is debatable.

Since we are passing into a new orbit or, expressed in different terms, since we are undergoing a transformation that is unprecedented in the history of the world and of culture, the one thing we can be sure of is that it is evidently taking place outside of our consciousness. To the same extent that this consciousness is becoming more exact “in the cockpit”, the voyage itself becomes more uncertain, insecure, and doubtful.

“Outside of our consciousness” does not mean, however, that the movement is also situated outside of our experience. Internal experience is related to consciousness as the mass of an iceberg is related to its visible part. In this respect, in our century voyages of discovery have been successfully carried out that are at the same level as the voyages to the deepest parts of the oceans.

The human being is the measure of things—the word gains a greater scope with the extension of knowledge. Internal knowledge has passed through the amoebas, the reptiles and the dinosaurs; it was felt all over the Moon long before a spaceship landed on it. Here resides the experience not just of periods in the history of the world, but also in the history of the Earth, not only of voyages in time, but also of explorations beyond the wall of time. Many contents that took shape in religions and also in myths, could only have become “conscious” in this way.

To activate this experience is now our most urgent task.

### ***The Case of Wagner***

**213**

If we now consider the premiere of *Figaro* as the model of a secular Lesser Transition, next we raise the question concerning how a Great Transition, the entry into a new “House”, is heralded. Entry always indicates supervention.

First of all, we want to set aside secondary considerations—such as whether, perhaps, man acquires a particularly relevant role, insofar as, for the first time since we have been able to speak of universal history, we are entering into an astrological sign that does not refer to an animal form. Other questions are connected with this one—thus, for example, that of knowing whether we have attained a sufficient level of spiritualization to spare ourselves the entry of the gods.

Therefore, we shall observe certain precautions, and in what follows the questions are not posed for the purpose of obtaining any answers, but only for the purpose of pointing to the method to formulate the questions.

How, for example, is *The Case of Wagner* different from the premiere of *Figaro*? At first glance, by its longevity, since *The Case of Wagner* has been hotly debated for more than a century. It lacks the explosive component of *Figaro*, despite the fact that it, too, was associated with scandals. It also lacks the strictly political element, despite the fact that his work has been repeatedly mobilized on the political battlefield. In Beaumarchais the fire disappeared into smoke; in Wagner new fuel is still being brought to the fire. And this fire is not, by the way, a “fire” in the political or social sense. And where it does cause destruction, we also hear a subtle crackling sound from the flames.

Baudelaire could not avoid hearing that sound. This is just where he found what he had been looking for in hashish: “The spirit is transported to that dreamlike state where total

clairvoyance is not far off, where one then perceives a new connection of the phenomena of the world which, undoubtedly, is of such a kind that it cannot be perceived with the eye of ordinary vision....”<sup>90</sup>

This is how it is expressed in the only essay that Baudelaire devoted to music in which, after the Parisian debut of *Tannhäuser* (1861), he defended Wagner against “the imbeciles ... of the gutter press”.

Wagner’s concert at the *Salle des Italiens* plunged Baudelaire into a kind of addiction. He went to all the cafes, to all performances, wherever a piece by the maestro was being performed.

*Tannhäuser* must have affected Nietzsche with a similar or even more violent enthusiasm. *The Case of Wagner* must be read with a critical spirit, like all polemics. It was written during his Turin period, in the fateful year of 1888, shortly before his breakdown. In such readings we must pay close attention to the points of light, to the flashes that glitter in the most diminutive crystals, as can be seen on the surface of the snow when the sun shines low on the horizon.

“Anarchy of the atoms.... hostility and chaos, always becoming more striking, as one ascends to ever higher forms of organisation.... our greatest miniaturist in music, who compresses into the smallest space an infinitude of meaning.... the heir of Hegel.... music decomposed and reduced, as it were, to the elementary.... He emancipates the oldest woman in the world, *Erda*.”

Along the way, there are expressions and sentences of which only Nietzsche is capable: “‘The world’, a Christian term of insult.... The Wagnerian musical directors, in particular, are worthy of an age which posterity will one day designate with timorous reverence, the classical age of war”. And, to top it all off, the quotation from Wagner: “Let us be careful. Let us struggle against our ambition, which would like to found religions. But nobody must venture to doubt that we save him, that our music alone brings salvation....” (from Wagner’s essay, “Religion and Art”).

Something must have happened there. Nietzsche’s main objection to Wagner, *décadence*—which is surprising, coming from Nietzsche—is not relevant in our context. However, it is just in such transitions that the *décadent* extends his tentacles as far as possible. His place is wherever the *bios* is being transformed into pus. It is even possible that this term is converted into an insult directed against the most capable and fecund of artists. He is the degenerate. When, nonetheless, the genre itself loses rank, value and power, perhaps the degenerate is the only one who still knows how to clear the way,

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<sup>90</sup> The original French text reads as follows: “Le caractère de la scène et le ton de la légende contribuent ensemble à jeter l’esprit dans cet état de rêve qui le porte bientôt jusqu’à la pleine clairvoyance, et l’esprit découvre alors un nouvel enchaînement des phénomènes du monde, que ses yeux ne pouvaient apercevoir dans l’état de veille ordinaire.”

while he strives to pass between the almost immaterial cracks of the petrified edifice; the last one who still possesses generative force.

However, we do not want to attribute value to mere success or to the fact that “the continuity of history is preserved”. Even where the type does not make progress, and that is its current fate, it has acted “in itself”. An example is Akhenaton, in whom the figure of the *décadent* rises to power and champions heresy. His name is inscribed in the Book, even if he did not experience the resurrection in time that was later conceded to him thanks to the work of the archaeologists. It is not by chance that this has succeeded for us, for there are related surprises between the spiritual position of this personage and ours: in his attempt to venerate natural forms, under the aspect of pure radiation, such as was developed in Heliopolis, and of spiritualizing them with the help of art.

## 214

*The Case of Wagner* will last longer than Nietzsche supposed. Exhaustion and crisis form part of its image. The way Nietzsche preferred to view the situation, however, is exemplified in prophecies like the following: “The age of national wars ... this whole interlude-character which the circumstances of Europe at present are possessed of, may, in fact, assist such art as that of Wagner in obtaining a sudden glory, without thereby guaranteeing to it a future....”

And he adds as a postscript: “The Germans themselves have no future.”

In both cases it is likely that he was mistaken. What is the future, anyway, when the question is framed in such terms? It is a word that is particularly dear to spirits who have no present moment. We can compile a whole catalogue of words that are the objects of celebration in this sense—for example, with respect to those who do nothing but invoke youth, maturity, tradition, the afterlife, ideals, the revolution, democracy and metaphysics. All, *au fond*, defensible, but only *au fond* when they are backed up by the necessary power. Otherwise, they degenerate into mere invective. That Spengler should have denied a future to the “Worker” seems surprising to me, coming from a thinker for whom the entire West had no more value than a form of Antiquity.

Anyone who participates as an invited guest in the sumptuous banquets of life, anyone who engenders, who creates, who enjoys, does not speak of the future in this way. Nietzsche, of course, was not unaware of this. Otherwise, how could he have venerated the light of noonday, the oasis, the most silent hour, honey, the serpent and the homecoming? The Mediterranean and also midnight?

## 215

Twelve years ago, in New York, exhausted after a long and tedious flight in a jet plane, the performance of *The Twilight of the Idols* at the Metropolitan Opera made me think of the part of this prophecy that relates to Wagner. The audience was predominantly Jewish;



in the final scene, Wotan comes onstage in the robes and with the overall appearance of the High Priest, Aaron.

Wagner's future seems to me to be more than assured.

Nietzsche quotes Goethe's definition of the fate of the Romantics: "Suffocation by chewing moral and religious absurdities over again", and he adds: "In fewer words: *Parsifal*". "The Christian wishes to get loose from himself... but perhaps the German also wants to free himself from himself ... To look enviously towards master morality, noble morality (the Icelandic legend is almost its most important document), and at the same time to have in his mouth the contrary doctrine, the 'Gospel of the Lowly' .... Modern man represents biologically a contradiction of moral values, he sits between two chairs, he says in one breath, Yea and Nay."

## 216

Meanwhile, what is here seeking philosophical expression by way of the voluptuous storm of the intuition has taken form in the vicissitudes of time, in unprecedented concentrations and shocking deliquescence.

In the premiere of *Figaro* a storm is also announced. There, too, the air is charged and foul. But even without taking into account that there the Roman expression, "one of two alternatives", prevails, and here the Germanic expression, "one as much as the other", it seems that the storms are different not only in the extent of their destructive power, but also in their quality.

Beaumarchais's action can lead to a common denominator: the Third Estate is knocking at the door. But who or what is coming and knocking at the door now?

At first, Wagner wanted to conclude *The Ring of the Nibelungs* with a hymn to "free love" and with the prospect of a utopia, where "all will be well", as Nietzsche says. Wagner finally rejected that plan; Beaumarchais opted in favor of it.

## 217

To judge the power of a Transition on the basis of the themes that motivate it constitutes, *a priori*, a mistake. Mediocrity sought to overcome itself by choosing "elevated materials". When a genius applied himself to them, in the historical novel, for example, like Flaubert in *Salammbô*, he takes on, instead, a temporary ballast. He will always proceed with freedom, as has been the case since ancient times in the great dramas. Art is sovereign, even against history.

When Nietzsche directed his attack particularly against *Parsifal*, it must only be understood, in part, as a thematic critique. The idea of salvation, which seemed particularly strange to him, is not contained in the theme, but in its background; to elaborate this theme, one does not need Christian subterfuges. In any case, Schopenhauer

managed to do so without resorting to Christianity; and, according to Nietzsche, Wagner created a poetic version of *The World as Will and Representation*.

The malaise might be rather widespread. What good are the gods, what good are the names that have more or less worn out with use? Nietzsche is not thinking of the figures of the shadow play, which move according to more or less preformed ideas and ideals, but his sarcasm points to the player casting the shadows who is hidden behind the scenes. But he is not capable of defeating him, just as Schopenhauer was not able to triumph over Hegel.

## 218

We must add something important: the strings or the wires that move the marionettes. We shall call them the weft.<sup>91</sup> Here the phenomenon becomes quite uniform.

One could object that its multiplicity resides in the actor from whom it is projected. Perhaps; but his nerve fibers also belong to the weft. And this brings us back, by way of greyish masses, from the reticulum to the undifferentiated.

Let us take a look at *our* shadow plays: the flows of images emitted from towers and satellites. The plurality appears on our screens. One could also call it the ephemeral or the futile, in comparison with what happens, certainly not in the studios, but behind the screens. There one finds the reticulum, there the weft; now the threads are waves that are transmuted into light, colors and sounds. They penetrate walls, even spectators, before they take part in differentiation. They travel through the bodies of human beings and animals without being perceived, albeit not without consequences.

The play becomes increasingly more uniform, more colorless and more profound; it approaches the pure action of weaving, just as the myths attributed weaving to the Fates and the Norns. Its theme is the spiritualization of the Earth.

The theme, but not the goal.

## 219

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<sup>91</sup> In its ordinary meaning, “weft” (*Gespinst*) designates the structure of a fabric, constituted by the interweaving of two types of thread: the warp and the weft, properly speaking; but it can also designate any type of interwoven or reticular structure, for example, the weft formed by two chemical substances, regardless of the figurative meaning of the argumentative framework of a work. In any case, in this context, Jünger is using textile metaphors to allude to this ultimate and ineffable structure that he implies is the basis of all approach. On other occasions, he mentions this same ontological structure in the form of a grid or mesh with the German word, *Raster*, that is, “reticulum”, mixing the textile metaphor with the optical metaphor.

The screen that is interposed between the weft and perception also performs a protective function. Just as cosmic radiation would be fatal without the shield of the atmosphere, so, too, would this weft, the primordial material of tragedy, be unendurable without a solid epidermis, without the “blunting of the senses” that protects us.

It is true that science teaches that certain kinds of cosmic radiation penetrate us. This also happens with telluric radiation. It is not good to be irradiated in excess by the latter, either.

Art, if it must preserve form and essence, cannot become too dense. The human spirit has always striven to draw borders here; it constitutes an act of self-defense. With respect to the question of what is art, at the beginning of his principal work Blüher compared the song that is born from the human throat and the trilling of the nightingale. As for the former, it is often said, “That is music!”, and with respect to the latter, “Those are the sounds of nature”, like the roaring of stags; “there is nothing behind it except the well-known forces of the sex drive”. And furthermore: “music is, *at its very root*, art, and works with instruments; it has nothing in common with the trilling of the nightingale except sound”.

As for tracing borders, it can be accepted. But can one accept these claims with respect to valuations? Is music really art “at its very root”, or is it also something else, something different? What is the significance of the arrogance with which Blüher demotes the nightingale to the same category as the howling of a mastiff in heat? Is this arrogance not all-too-similar to that of the thinking artist whom Nietzsche also wanted to distinguish from Wagner?; is it not the same distinction he makes between the thinking artist and the traditional artist?

*Ad notam*: modern ornithologists have proven that the twittering of the songbirds sounds more beautiful when they sing without any reason—and therefore, when they are not in heat and not fighting over territory.

## 220

Meanwhile, we should clarify what we mean by Great Transition. It is revealed in the concentration of forces, which, certainly, never ceases to act in art and history, but which is not manifested in its pure state. Cosmic radiation is concentrated, the telluric weft works from the loom of the depths. It can happen stealthily or ostentatiously; it is likely that precisely the most decisive phases take place without being observed. Suddenly, the serpent appears in the house. Perhaps it has always lived there.

It is no longer a matter of the rank of a work of art, but of the definition and the fate of art in general. It is not clear what we must identify as art; the borders are not distinct.

It is evident that, now and then, the concept must be reconceived. After the battle of Jena, some Prussian generals said that a victory of that type (that is, one involving troops advancing in dispersed order) was not art. But they could not deny the reality of the

victory. On the other hand, Blücher, after the battle of Katzbach, could say: “We have overcome that, too; now you will have to explain to me how we can make these people understand the clever way we did everything”.

## 221

The question of whether the considerations posed by Nietzsche in *The Case of Wagner* “correspond to the truth” is irrelevant here. They possess value in themselves as a model for thinking of a higher rank. To this we add the following observation: when a mathematician draws figures on a blackboard with a piece of chalk—circles, triangles, parallelograms—these are “types” that do not exist in nature. In a strict sense, they are not present in architecture, either. And, when it comes right down to it, if they can be successfully represented on a blackboard, this is only an approximation. They are nothing but representations. The point that is conjured from the depths of the boundless appears in the form of a small scratch of chalk.

However, it should not be said that nothing has happened once the sketches are erased. Something has happened that goes beyond simple comparisons and demonstrations; certain spiritual powers have been convoked before the tribunal of the intuition. A summons that, like applied geometry, has an impact on time and space, on the field of physical forces.

The eye has extracted energy from the non-extensive by means of the relay of figures, and there are analogous relays or transformers for the undifferentiated. In this way, it begins to move like fabric on the loom; it begins to shuttle like the weft of the Norns. Once seen, the figures can be erased.

## 222

Classification becomes more difficult as qualities become more indistinct. In the undifferentiated there is an immense reserve of force, but without qualitative differences. Especially with respect to valuations, we touch upon the infernal circle of “degeneration” and of the new energy that forms on the basis of this abyss.

The main reproach leveled by Nietzsche against Wagner is that of sickliness, *decadence*. It comes from his natural ill health, which, on the other hand, is propitious for prophesy. Nietzsche not only saw the sickness, but he also saw how the weft began to move, because both quivered in his own entrails. His genius was formed by both, and he has brilliantly affirmed and denied both.

The difficulty cannot be resolved; it resides in the climate, not in individuals. We may refer to it by way of an image. A frozen lake can be crossed; this is one of the symbols coined by Nietzsche. The ice forms the shell, a crystal of solid forms.

When a warm wind blows, then the ice breaks up and, finally, you cannot walk on it. The great form, consequently, the supporting form, becomes soft and deceptive. This state of

affairs is reproduced, by analogy, in microclimates even in the formation of crystals, even of atoms. In a glass of water, right at the line around the freezing point, the crystals form and deliquesce following minimal fluctuations, so that confusion is produced. There is a border before which we can no longer decide whether this or that body is at the point of melting or of sublimating, if it is moribund or *in statu nascendi*.

We have seen the weft, this time in its crystallographic version. Here qualities and times melt and merge—even death and life. From now on we only have to wait.

### ***Optical models***

#### **223**

Thus, the judgment of value has become difficult, if not entirely impossible. It must be referred, if not reduced to a museum value, not only to the form, but also to the movement. A glance at our life, at our world, suffices to corroborate this.

We know perfectly well what is of “value” in an image up to the recent past. We even know it all too well. As long as we move within the history of culture we have information. When, however, supplied with such information, we seek to dominate objects that show themselves to be totally or partly evasive, we enter “no man’s land”. The bridges have been burned, now we have to cross by swimming; here no geometry can help us.

#### **224**

With respect to the judgment of value, I recall the phenomenon of crystallization around the freezing point, and with respect to method I think of the example of the chalk and the eraser.

Does Vincent van Gogh belong to the history of culture? Without a doubt, despite the fact that his work can also be contemplated from other points of view, such as from the clinical point of view. He belongs to the history of culture like Mabuse, Altdorfer, Hokusai, Pousin or even the anonymous painters of the caves of Lascaux. His work, including the colors, the curves, the undulations, can be sounded by means of information, if not with the help of computers, then at least with techniques of the “Great Office of Convergence” in *Heliopolis*.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> In his utopian novel, *Heliopolis* (1949), Jünger describes the operations of the Office of Convergence as a great subterranean center, equipped with “extremely intelligent machines”, responsible for performing, in conjunction with the Central Archive, operations of registry and statistics, capable of relating “anything that has a form with a system of coordinates”; that is, anything susceptible to concentrating and unifying the information of any time and place, and transforming it into power. Ernst Jünger, *Heliópolis*, Seix Barral, Barcelona, 1987 (tr. Marciano Villanueva), pp. 43-45.

We must add, as a reservation, that a work of art always harbors a remnant that is refractory to any method. A great painting not only contains an esthetic effect, but also a completely internal effect, a magical effect. This effect was, in its origins, powerful, even predominant, and diminished as art acquired autonomous laws and rules. This must have taken place locally even in a very early epoch—even before Lascaux.

Nonetheless, this magical participation reaches even to our time. It is hard to define, because it does not belong to the work of art but is nevertheless concealed within it. A comparison may make this easier to understand, that is: the comparison of wine and its lees. This can be developed in various directions.

We can see the little that magic or enchantment has to do with a work of art in the “miraculous icon”. The latter attains, only on rare occasions, the rank of a work of art, for the more “capable” the artist, the more impenetrable will be the wall that separates him from that layer. In any event, there remains “nothing but art”, that is, virtuosity, if the lees are not completely filtered out. For this reason, all works of art contain not only a potential of esthetic charm, but also an immediate magical force. This opens up a vast field. The historian of culture, Erhard Göpel, who unfortunately died young, developed, above all in conversations, intuitions that transcended the frontiers of art as well as those of history.

## 225

If Vincent undoubtedly belongs to the history of art, there are, however, in his art, tendencies that lead directly beyond the line, beyond art. They must be distinguished from the technique of dissolution that he borrowed from the *puntillistes* (*Portrait of Père Tanguy*).

The last intoxication of color begins in 1888, when Nietzsche’s fate was sealed in Turin. Now it becomes dangerous; the magmatic force shines in masses of incandescent and liquid gold. In one case, the rain of gold on the Danae, in the other the golden wheat field over which the ravens fly as heralds of death. A few days later, he went to the countryside to “hunt ravens” with his revolver. Then, abundance was powerfully manifested, not only for the artist, but also for the mayfly whose wings were burned.

Woe to thee, Zarathustra!  
You resemble one  
who has swallowed gold:  
you will yet have your belly cut open!

For a long time the thought sparked, like the flare of a match, before a great light was liberated. “What is drawing?”, Vincent asks. “How does one learn it? It is working through an invisible iron wall that seems to stand between what one feels and what one can do. How is one to get through that wall—since pounding against it is of no use? One must undermine the wall and drill through it slowly and patiently, in my opinion”.

True, and the danger becomes greater as this undermining is accompanied by an increase of physical debility. Thus it was in Arles, and in Turin. The image is a good one—it is prophetic, in the highest sense of the word, it leads far beyond the ephemeral existence of art and the artist.

Art works on surfaces—the eyes on the butterfly’s wings, the leopard’s mottled skin—but the models from the depths undulate within it.

## 226

The experts have debated the extent to which Vincent’s art should be attributed to a “conscious configuration”, and the extent to which it is due to a psychopathological state. Controversial questions of this kind could be debated with regard to many of the artists of that era, Utrillo, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec; when it comes right down to it, there is no such thing as a normal artist. This debate is irrelevant and we should not waste any more time on it, for, to paraphrase a well known saying, it does not matter if one is sick or healthy, the only thing that counts is what one does with one’s health or one’s illness.<sup>93</sup>

We are not interested in clinical symptoms, but in microcrystals, wefts, reticuli, the effects of radiation: in short, signs of the Great Transition. Does the thread run towards the borderline, to lose itself there? Or are topographic details and lineaments of the Other Side already discernable, as if from the peak of Mount Nebo?

In this respect one must think, as I have already said, that the weft takes after both sides. It has been a long time since the alternative was sickness vs. health, and the same is true of the alternative, one quality vs. another. One loses one’s directions—like a compass in the eye of a hurricane. The particles do not tell us whether the wave is breaking or receding, if it is coming from above or from below.

## 227

A painting like *Study of Pine Trees* (Rijksmuseum) is already quite noteworthy in this respect. However, it produces a feeling of familiarity—familiarity in the sense that we are entering an estate, perhaps distant, but without thereby leaving our house. Through the windows we glimpse a landscape swept by the mistral. The wind brushes its lines towards the sky; there, they become more distinct than in the braided texture of the crown of a tree. Composition: the rein is still controlled by the hand.

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<sup>93</sup> Jünger is paraphrasing a statement by Gottfried Benn, which he had previously quoted in *At the Wall of Time*: “Es kommt darauf an, was einer aus seinem Nihilismus macht” (“What counts is what one does with one’s nihilism”). Benn addressed the controversial question of the relation between art, illness and nihilism, especially in two essays from 1930: *Genie und Gesundheit* [Genius and Health] and *Das Genieproblem* [The Problem of Genius], the latter of which is included in our edition of his writings, *El yo moderno* [The Modern Ego], Pre-Textos, Valencia, 1999, pp. 57-68.

Echoes of the modernist style. In Munch a similar tendency is discerned. The psychic substance is not accommodated within either the situation or the figures; it is distributed throughout the painting, as if it had dissolved and had been reapplied on the canvas. It is no less legible on the faces than on the branches of the trees and the lines of hands. The horror is undeniable, but the ghosts nonetheless form part of the furniture of the house. Many paintings from that era evoke spiritualist sessions and their manifestations. This is even more evident in the North (Munch's *The Scream* and Whistler's *Study*).

Viewed historically, Van Gogh figures, with his *Study of Pine Trees*, among the masters who have transmitted to us famous paintings of forests and trees. If we imagine ourselves in a museum devoted to these themes, we could, beginning with Fra Filippo Lippi and Altdorfer, walk through a series of rooms to reach, finally, that room whose window allows us to see the landscape swept by the mistral.

We enter. Nothing totally strange lies before us. Is there anything that could be “totally” strange to us, anyway? It is hardly plausible, not even on Sirius. Horror only overcomes us when powers from very ancient epochs or very distant spaces erupt upon us. This horror itself is a sign of recognition, a sign that we have already known it.

## 228

If, in this tendency, a movement concludes that for a long time has preoccupied art and artists—perhaps since the Renaissance, perhaps since the Gothic era, depending on how far we want to extend the boundary—one may ask if new elements arise beyond this very fine line.

In the final analysis, painting is nothing but an example, a model, of higher optics—and the latter is, in turn, a model of transformations that take place outside of optics. A new style is a proclamation. It is at the same time a response to previous works, whether as a rejection, or as an acceptance. It can be viewed as progress, or it can be seen as a dialectical, cyclical or rhythmic development.

## 229

The mechanistic vision of progress is the most simple, and therefore it is the one that has been imposed most vigorously—thus, for example, Darwin as opposed to Cuvier and Lamarck. But there is no progress without regression. Or, less paradoxically: the sum of the forces in the universe remains constant.

Evolution should also be represented more or less as a tapestry that is displayed over the substance. This presupposes an expenditure of energy. New forces compensate for this, forces that flow from the Other Side and supervene. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by the decoration, for example, by scientific subtlety or by the artistic palette: the weft of the tapestry is colorless, on both sides, and is radically deprived of qualities by virtue of the proximity of the thing in itself.



To take an example from optical physics, X-rays and crystallography are the latest refinements of the classical enhancement of vision. That was still the 19<sup>th</sup> century; atomic physics is the response of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Roentgen and Rutherford represent two different types; the electron microscope does not presuppose any development of the optical microscope, but a new connection with the cosmos.

The new century now stands out with distinct outlines. Even more distinctly in forms than in people's heads, since from a rational point of view, it does not seem to need more than a few more steps for the process to be perfected and reach a conclusion.

We are already capable of discerning with some certainty what must be located on this and that side of the line. "This" means (at least in this context): our side; and "that" means: the past.

On the other hand, the fact that in Vincent van Gogh the wave breaks, while in the Cubists it becomes choppy, constitutes an almost unanimous point of agreement among the specialists. Immediately before the First World War something must have happened in Paris, in La Roche-Guyon and in other places in the world, comparable to a rip in the curtain. It is not just another change in style, but a Transition of greater scope.

If we compare Vincent's *Study of Pine Trees* (ca. 1888) and August Macke's *Two Girls in the Forest* (spring of 1914) and adopt as a our point of comparison the forest in Altdorfer's painting of Saint George (1510), then we can, without a great deal of effort, retrace the path that led from Vincent back to Altdorfer—but not the one that leads from Macke, one of our great hopes, back to Altdorfer.

Macke's painting is a source of valuable suggestions, and therefore both its thematic as well as its expressive means possess a synoptic character. The color seems to have melted around the zero point and then to have crystallized again, undoubtedly over large areas.

It urges us to disencumber ourselves of the idea that something only happens in the realm of the absolutely small, in atoms for example. This affirmation *also* contains a point of truth; but a Great Transition supervenes in every dimension and in every discipline of science. Which sheds light on the likeness not only of apparatuses, which serve distinct ends, such as, for example, the telescope and the microscope, but also on the visual worlds that the former open up to perception. The existence of such similarities is less a question of fact than a question of style, as a configuration of a powerful will, both in the macrocosmic as well as in the microscopic domains.

A similar transition is manifested, consequently, both in the large and the small—it can also supervene with a figurative or abstract or non-figurative thematic. These are questions of technique and, as such, of transcendence for the history of art. What interests

us, however, is not so much forms and their differences, as the forces that elevate forms in their totality. This happens outside of art and independently of it.

The concept of “Cubism”, like that of “Baroque” and other similar concepts, was born accidentally, on the occasion of Georges Braque’s premiere showing (Paris, 1908). It soon became evident that “the last bridges with materialism had been burned”, which, as I have said, cannot be claimed with respect to either Van Gogh or even the Fauvistes, who had already come close to the line. But on their side melting still prevailed, while with Braque, crystallization has been reached.

When one of the Cubists said that he wanted to approach the “thing in itself”, his desire expressed the same need as Vincent’s, that is: to undermine the walls that separated it from feeling. It is the same goal, but pursued from two opposite points.

The border can separate individuals (“young” and “old”), and can also be overcome within the individual. The transition from Fauvism to Cubism forms part of this context. The distance between Braque’s painting, *The Door* (1906) and *The Guitar Players* (1914) is almost unbridgeable; here something different must have supervened within the pure temporal sequence.

The fact is that there are artists whose work is an obstacle, rather, for reflection, whose point of gravity reposes in the nameless. Must we therefore choose models from other domains, for example, from physics, where the transition is especially obvious? This choice entails, once again, the risk that the phenomena fail to fit the figure. With regard to this point, the fate of *The Worker* has served me as an object lesson.

## 232

When contemplating paintings like *Homage to J. S. Bach* (1912), by Braque, *The Scottish Girl* (1918), by Juan Gris, or even *The Surrender of Barcelona*, by Wyndham Lewis, painted at a later date, our attention is called both to the marked affinity between these paintings as well as their total foreignness both with respect to the immediately preceding works of art and even contemporary ones. It is disconcerting; faces emerge from the bottom of clouds of confetti. They have little to do with art; it seems, rather, that the field of art has been abandoned, or is even in danger.

Winckelmann, the “guardian of noble innocence and serene greatness”, contemplated the small Sardinian bronzes as barbarous trash. Today they instead speak to us of a greatness, certainly not noble, but modest. This is not accidental.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> These bronzes inspired Jünger to write a brief essay entitled, *Sardinian Fatherland. A Walk through the Museum of Cagliari*, published in the journal, *Antaeus*, in 1962. See Ernst Jünger, *Sämtliche Werke* 12, Klett-Cotta.

For Goethe, concerning whom one could say that he went as far as the East, but not as far as Mexico, the gods of Mexico were a complete atrocity, the absolute opposite of beauty. This how we must interpret the verses of his posthumous work:

For a Vitzliputzli would be  
Talisman upon Thy heart!<sup>95</sup>

## 233

That it should be precisely images and affinities of this type that are presented to us is not, as we have said, an accident: they are prefigurations that come directly from behind the weft and are projected on the empty surface. They belong less to the abysses of time than to those of space, whose depths we can explore at all times. In this sense we still find ourselves underground, in the caves at Lascaux.

Montezuma was waiting for Cortez; the arrival of the White Gods had been prophesied. This explains many of their conquests, which only belong in part to history and in part to the realm of legend, as Stucken understood.

It is to be assumed that there is a movement in the opposite sense; Mexico acquires distinct traits in opposition to us. To the same extent, it flourishes within us. The signs begin to come to life; they still await their Champollion.

This case is similar to that of Goethe, who had a correct instinctive reaction against anything that might pose a threat to the culture of antiquity. He sensed the irreconcilable character of the Mexican world with respect to our culture. He could only glimpse an affinity with it when he reached the end of the road.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century Mexico will play a more important role in archaeology, and not only in that discipline, than the one that has until recently been played by Egypt. It will surpass the domain of science. Compared with it, Egyptology has been all-too-scrupulously limited to its own specialty. In *The Magic Flute* the many possibilities it harbors have been hinted at. These possibilities vividly came to life for me during a nocturnal walk through the Temple of Karnak.

Flaubert's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* is also worthy of comparison. There, something begins to stir in the shadows cast by the temple—in the shadows cast by the century of the Enlightenment.

## 234

When, in the changes of time, archaic powers approach or even supervene—Greek, German, Egyptian or Mexican gods—it is not a repetition that takes place, but a return.

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<sup>95</sup> Conclusion of the poem, “Süsses Kind, die Perlenreihen...”, which Goethe did not include in his *Divan* due to its anti-Christian spirit.

A repetition takes place, for example, with Napoleon III. Meanwhile, time has seen his power undermined. Return refers to the acquisition of a position of a starting point outside of time. When this event takes place, it is usually only recognized much later, that is: as a result of that which survives the process of demythologization. This is where the *advocatus diaboli* of modernism goes to work, and its task is not difficult in an epoch in which the actors no longer deal in myths, or even with fairy tales, even if they sing their praises to the sound of trumpets. Not another face, but an image in which clever mercenaries are at work. Colossi with feet of clay; when they fall they are followed, instead of by songs, by a cloud of dust dispersed by the wind.

## 235

Repetition confirms the order of stable and classical epochs and their security. At such times legacies accumulate, one monarch succeeds another, one style dissolves harmoniously into another.

In return, art *touches bottom*: it reaches domains that no longer allow it to be subjugated. Its configurative capacity is weakened and its capacity for conjuration is strengthened. When archaic powers supervene, when they suddenly erupt next to us, causing terror, joy or happiness, they are not the goal that we have to attain. They are instead testimonies of something imminent, of an approaching goal. Then silence is imposed, even in music. The nameless can be expressed with sounds, but it cannot be named.

If we invoke them by their names, then we will have exchanged return for mere repetition. However, they are nothing but witnesses—Pillars of Hercules. The nameless, that which is not coined in the form of money, beckons to other journeys. What returns is not an Olympus of the gods, but the timeless matrix where they were born. New names are needed to apprehend it.

From this perspective one can understand the accusation of “histrionic” with which Nietzsche summarizes his attack on Wagner. His art is understood as a sign of a Great Transition and at the same time as an example of the way that a Great Transition can be spoiled and betrayed. His art was content with a mask. We can judge it differently.

## 236

Rather than figures supervening, something must have happened within the undifferentiated. At the freezing point, the particles that have been transformed into crystals are not just similar, but equal to those that will crystallize. In this intermediate time the weft undergoes a stage in which its fiber is colorless. Then, new models are in the works.

Where the weft loses its qualities, not only are material differences fused, but so too are those characterizing points of reference: the differences between up and down, high and low, right and left, and even between life and death.

When the fiber recovers its color, however, the relative differences of the reference points are manifested—at first in the form of diverse processes of development. Thus, the powers of interconnection, spirals and woven forms with knots arise. Science comes to the encounter with these structures, on the small as well as the large scale, both in the atoms and in the molecules as well as in cosmography, in its conceptions of the inorganic and the organic world. These models extend from the spiral nebulae to the fabric of the genes, and even deeper. These movements precede the formation of every crystal.

We must presume the existence of similar processes in the genesis of the work of art. A large part of the work of art does not acquire a figure and remains in the limbo of the concept or intuition. Another part will erupt unexpectedly.

### 237

When a creature reproduces in the organic world, whether in the form of a bacillus, a snail or a *convolvulus*, a movement is repeated that is very close to the reticulum. “Lower” organisms like the *foraminifera* possess this capacity, but so do the more highly evolved organisms. In the evolution of the ammonites the movement comes and goes, as if reproduction was always necessarily reiterated.

These movements span the entire morphological reserve. Their existence is conjecturable wherever the style is extremely simplified, but they can also penetrate extensive reserves and produce Baroque universes. To behold a nautilus shell cut into two halves is to behold a marvel. Something similar also penetrates our technological landscape.

### 238

In this context the following question, among others, is posed: whether the magmatic eruption destroys, in every circumstance, the form and particularly the evolved form, or whether it can instead transform it, perhaps even make it fertile? Generally speaking, volcanic force must not be conceived as only an absolutely isolated power, but also as a cooperative power. This is how it is manifested in the larger economy of the earth; it testifies to its weft. That it should show itself in the color red is, now and then, necessary, just like the cycle of feast days on the calendar.

### 239

It is important that we should be guided, more than once, to the extreme frontiers of the human, as was the original meaning of the festival. Its history can be divided into two great hopes: in the desire to become identical with the animal, and in the hope that the gods will supervene.

The precondition for such approach is that the human being should remain open. It is known that today he is no longer so capable of such a thing and that he proposes this even

less than in any other period of his history; to the contrary, he proposes to totally humanize the world and to saturate it with the human substance.

Must we resign ourselves to the fact that sensory apparatuses that existed in the past should slowly degenerate and die? This is Huxley's view in *Brave New World*.

Or is it precisely the total purge and clean sweep of the metaphysical remnants eroded by time that will allow us to expect the unprecedented? Nietzsche, who made a tabula rasa by revoking the gods along with men, undoubtedly harbored great hopes. But he expressed them imprecisely. Like Zarathustra, the wise man was able, and is still able, to live in any time.

However, what meaning can living have without contact with those frontiers before which not only human beings but even the gods and animals are daunted? This question has always disturbed and worried the human being, and even today it is still the most secret of his anxieties.

## 240

Zarathustra loved the serpent; he took it for the most clever of the beasts. By this he could not have been referring to the empirical snake, the animal as an object of scientific knowledge and anatomical and zoological description. He must have had in mind another kind of intelligence and a different creature than the one that is manifested in nature.

Indeed, the cleverness and intelligence of Mother Earth lives in the serpent, but not with any greater power than in any other creature. This does not explain the fear and veneration that it aroused in the East and in the West, the rank to which he was raised above the heads of the gods and kings, or the one to which he was relegated at the foot of the cross. Nor does it explain the shock of the hiker—no matter how wise and brave he may be—at whose feet the snake lies coiled.

A force must be acting in the serpent that is stranger and more powerful, a force that, right up to our time, has preserved and maintained as a revealed secret his immediate capacity to strike fear into our hearts.

If we compare this shock with the effect of a work of art, we may say that it acts by reduction to a fundamental form that we call the weft. It is not a primordial power, but a power that, by way of evolution, has been regressively stylized until it provokes fascination and shock. Long ago the snake had limbs; in the ophidians, however, they atrophied, and only some anatomical vestiges remain. From an evolutionary point of view, a flagellate, a coelenterate, or a lamprey, is a more primordial organism. Many of these creatures, like the spirochetes, are also incomparably more dangerous.

Thus, in the serpent we are presented with a mask, and an especially highly developed mask. This testifies to the value that has been conceded to this creature since ancient times. It is the animal of the funerary gods, and also of Aesculapius—a creature whose

venom unites both powers, deadly poison and cure. Peoples widely separated from one another in time and space venerate in it the primordial power of the earth. It is the origin and end of metamorphoses.

## 241

*The mask in space*: what we sense through it shocks us and fills us with ecstasy. We listen attentively; *personat*: a sound comes to us. Every work of art has to display something of this character; what it represents, is presentation. If what it offers is nothing more than representation, something that comes to us though music and light, it is reduced to an empty spectacle, to a mere mask: this is the fundamental objection to artistic naturalism, as well as against the zoological naturalism that is practiced today.

*The mask in time*: When the serpent lies coiled and then uncoils before our gaze, it is something more than an episodic encounter that is soon overcome. In this sense, the historical event is like the work of art—something different from the ephemeral, from the just and the unjust, from crime and suffering, cooperates in its temporal representation. The criminal and the victim are those who are often least aware of this fact. Tolstoy: in the Russian winter Napoleon disposed of an insignificant measure of free will. Clemenceau: the human being who knew least about the *affaire* was Dreyfus himself. Therefore he did not see anything more than the episode which his rehabilitation brought to an end. Also part of this context is the liquidation of types that have inflicted atrocious harm. To give them death is not contrary to order, but it does not repair the reduction that order has suffered, either. The quantification of the harm produces a kind of perturbation in reason.

It is not the fact that something happens, but the impression that is gathered “as if something had happened”, upon which the power of the facts and the work of art are based. The latter must transport us beyond time and space. All approach points to this. The woman of the night, who displays herself in a window in a port city, knows what will happen, and desires it. It is necessary, however, no matter how squalid it may be, that it should take place “as if” something else really happened in addition. Meanwhile, everything is reduced to a mask, to mere representation, to a realistic “action”. If something else must happen here, it is the customer who must provide it.

The woman works like a hunter of serpents, but is not prepared to offer anything of the serpent itself.

## 242

The serpent does not horrify us so much by virtue of its venom, its immobility or its lack of limbs. It seems rather as if, for an instant, the weft moves slightly. Life and death are

mixed together, the floor becomes unstable. In every hazardous gesture there is concealed the great and only danger.<sup>96</sup>

In this sense, the serpent indicates a frontier—for some time, now, however, it has not been alone. Seeing it arouses a reminiscence from times immemorial: the proximity of that weft within which, like any other difference, the dividing line between life and death is also blurred. The veil becomes more tenuous and colorless. The physicians of old recognized it as a sure sign of imminent death, when the dying man began to “pick at the threads in his bedclothes”.

If it can be said of anyone that he is a “reliable customer”, who brings and provides something, it is the dying man. Here there are no more detours, the route is straight and direct. We have to cross the “valley of shadows”, even when our senses no longer serve us. The path leads further, even when hands and feet have ceased to move and the heart has stopped beating.

Whether some differences still persist here—for example, between entry and departure—is a question that has obsessed human beings since their origins, and often almost exclusively. Anyone who is inclined to a positive answer, or who even takes into consideration such a possibility, is immediately confronted with the following question: whether it is indeed possible to work in this direction in this life, whether by way of the meditative path, by the method of a rule of life or through a symbolic journey by way of death?

To behave “as if” something will happen: this is the meaning of mental exercises, both military as well as mystical. There are soldiers who have never been in the line of enemy fire, although throughout their entire lives they have exercised with this approach in mind. However, behind the enemy lines death lies in wait, and no one can spare themselves from this encounter.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> The ophidian as a Gnostic symbol of undifferentiated unity occupies a privileged place in Jünger’s bestiary, as already exemplified by the serpents in *On the Marble Cliffs* (1939). Jünger himself emphasized their relation to the realm of Mothers and to Zarathustra’s disciple: “Nietzsche has seen in it a completely different form of intelligence, its proximity to the earth”. See Julian Hervier, *Conversaciones con Ernst Jünger*, FCE, Mexico City, 1990, pp. 40-41.

<sup>97</sup> The image of approach (*Annäherung*) also evokes the topographical-military sense of “march” or “advance” towards the line that has been traced since *Storms of Steel* (1920) and *Battle as Inner Experience* (1922): “Then [the combatant] merges with the whole, he rapidly marches through the doors of death like a bullet towards its target.” On this metaphorical question, see Enrique Ocaña, *Duelo e historia*, Alfons el Magnànim, Valencia, 1996, pp. 19-59.



Just as there are veins that solidify in magma during the process of cooling, the web can form almost without any transition and attain a high degree of perfection. It is to be supposed that the great draftsmen, whose works are so breathtaking because of their fabulous richness, have preserved a reserve of that decisive effort to create images. Even if these images proliferate inside them, like a plant, we must not attribute their power to this factor. The work of art exists in space, whether as a palace or a modest shack, but it exists. Here, however, something different is intermingled, a pantomime gesture of which the artist is not aware, and that perhaps even annoys him.

We encounter this petrified movement, *in statu nascendi*, not in Lascaux and Altamira—those are already works of art—but in Mexico. This involves, as we shall never cease to emphasize, not so much dates established over the course of time, but rather experiences on the frontiers of time, always possible at any point in time—even, and once again more than ever, in our time.

Here we must not forget the reason for the interweaving of Celtic and Germanic elements, which is also found in countries that hardly know the serpent. I shall provide an excerpt from my diaries on the Oseberg Ship, which is on display in Oslo, a funerary vessel, lavishly decorated with ornaments:

“As among the Celts, here interweaving plays an important role; this motif covers almost the entire surface of the wood. These figures cannot have been born from a pure spirit of invention. It rather appears that they conjured, by magical art, a universe of lines, as if it had burst from the well-spring of the undifferentiated, and that, from an artistic point of view, it would be unimaginable, refractory even to any formulation. The ornamentation of loops harbors much more powerful forces than mere estheticism could provide. It is the net of fate, with its dense, even indivisible reticulum. All those blacksmiths, weavers, builders of ships and carts were at the same time magicians. That which the hand created, acquired life; the verse was a magical formula. This is how we have to see the warship with its crew: as a powerful dragon that plows the waves, sure of its goal.”

## 244

Historians like Walter F. Otto (1874-1958) and Wilhelm Grönbech (1873-1948) achieved that which was denied to Jacob Burckhardt, or which he had denied to himself: the step that leads from historical-cultural considerations to immediate reality—on one side the Greeks, on the other the Germans and their world.

The fact that the Christians worship a single god who does not tolerate other gods at his side is a fact that the world has had to pay for dearly. And not only has it paid with the extermination of human beings and peoples, but also with the planned destruction of documents. This makes it difficult not only to have access to the more refined cultures of Mexico, but also to our own ancestors. In this respect, the existence of Snorri represents for us a unique stroke of good luck.

Nevertheless, Grönbech was still obliged to grope around in the dark for the most part to return to interpretations that were more in accord with the original sense, starting from Christian interpolations and distortions. Thus, the meaning of the *blót* as a sacramental magical ceremony. We must add a few more considerations.

Grönbech designates the *blót* as a “creative festival”. He is referring to a festival with a particular purpose, that is: conjuration and the epiphany of the gods. He could also consider it as a solemnity, since the atmosphere was undoubtedly more than festive; it was majestic.

In accordance with its nature, the festival is linked to particular days, to the cycle and to return. This feature may also have been applicable to the *blót*, but only in part, since it could be celebrated independently of the cycle, for an immediate purpose—for instance, to solicit advice from the ancestors and from the gods before making serious decisions. This is why one must imagine the circle of the congregants as a more reduced and homogeneous group than that of the guests in the banquet halls of the big landowners and princes.

In both cases, the participants drank, and undoubtedly copiously. The difference was approximately the one that was long ago established between “dinner” and “banquet”. In the *blót*, viands were not served on the table, and jokes were definitely out of place. The atmosphere was serious and rather anxious, charged with expectation. The singer, the bard, was not supposed to appear in public, either. But they undoubtedly pronounced verdicts. In the great banquet hall, on the other hand, jubilation reigned to excess.

Festivity and solemnity had to touch on their borders and interweave; their separation is an act of spiritual anatomy rather than historical anatomy. We must agree with Grönbech that the ritual of the Germans has been lost in its essential features and “that we were never in any position to reconstruct the rite in its development”.

The banquet was attended by the men, especially in the great banquet hall; the *blót* transported them to another time. History and fate were severed. In the former, the human being was united with his kind in the fabric; in the latter, he congregated in the web.

It is not a difference between two points of a temporal sequence, but between two incommensurable temporal orders. In festive joy, the past and the future were celebrated. For the participants, the exploits of their fathers and also their own exploits were the objects of praise. One listened to the singer, and also to those whose names would survive in the memory of their descendants. “The beloved weapons gleam”; courage and exuberance increase. They easily overestimated their own limits. The Phaeacians agreed to arm a ship for Odysseus; the officers of the Prussian Guard sharpened their sabers on the stairs of the French embassy, before 1806.

A different temporal order reigns in the *blót*. When the gods are conjured, they are not convoked from the past, from “time immemorial”. Nor should one solicit oracles, or try to divine the future. When the Goths committed themselves to such a way of life they had

already lost their power. Past and future are instead concentrated in the prodigious tension of the moment. One arrives at the bridge; time flows below. Here one finds the most remote chamber, here is where the treasure lies, with respect to which the works and exploits of the external world represent nothing but miserable copies. Where fate is lived is where it is contemplated.

## 245

Next is the temptation to confer upon this encounter an oracular meaning, as has always happened and will always happen. The future must be opened up to view or it must be completely determined—upon this choice, priests, magicians and astrologers have at all times made their living.

The vulgar conception of astrology is entirely encapsulated in the desire to interpret the future. The general lack of knowledge of and disdain for prayer generates an attraction to fortune-telling.

The Great Transition leads beyond time as such, and, ultimately, beyond the future as well. The future merges with the past in the incandescence of the moment. Nietzsche referred to this moment when he spoke of “happiness at noonday”. The clock stops. To this we must add what Schopenhauer says about the solemn power of the moment of death. Here, at the Customs Station, in anxious expectation, the fundamental motif of the melody of life echoes for the last time.<sup>98</sup>

## 246

Properly speaking, the gods are not conjured but illuminated; this fact has been well described by Grönbech, and it was also familiar to Angelus Silesius, as is corroborated by some of his boldest verses.

The gods are therefore *in statu nascendi*, almost without qualities, not yet eroded by worship and faith: they “sound” more than they act, as can be discerned from many of their names (Frei, Freia, Fro, and also the ones that begin with Jo, Ju, Jul).

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<sup>98</sup> Jünger uses the German term, *Zollstation*, literally, “customs station”, a clear allusion to a beautiful passage in *The Adventurous Heart* (1938), whose title is precisely, “An der Zollstation”. In his approach to the *ultima linea rerum*, the dying man—writes Jünger—“experiences a pause in his journey, like at a lonely customs station high in the mountains, where the local coins of his memories are exchanged for gold. His consciousness reaches forward like a light, and by its radiance he recognizes that he is not being cheated, but rather that he is exchanging fear for certainty.” Here, too, he mentions that last notes of the *leitmotiv* of life that are typical of the border experiences with death: “... as if, after the opera and the lowering of the curtain, the main theme was played again in the empty space by an invisible orchestra, lonesome, tragic, proud, and with deadly significance” (Ernst Jünger, *The Adventurous Heart*, tr. Thomas Frieze, Telos Press, Candor, N.Y., 2012, p. 83).

They are not found in the roots or in the crowns of the trees, but at the foot of the ash tree, where the higher sphere and the lower sphere shine like a mirror. There, the weft is colorless, without quality. Hence the intrepidity, the power based on knowledge, that triumphs over seas and peoples.

The place where a “great” *blót* is celebrated is considered to be sacred ground; there a commemorative stele is erected. Hence one concludes that the encounter is not always consummated.

## 247

If, in the historical past of people and religions, or in their ethnographic present, we venture to inquire into the absolute, we will only attain to models, normative criteria in most cases. We have to provide the measure ourselves. Names, even those of the gods, are not just noise and smoke. Anyone who accepts them in the sense of mere repetition has already lost the game before it even started.

In this respect, I am reminded of a nocturnal conversation I once had with the writer, Ernst Wiechert, who died some time ago. It was at the Leipzig observatory; he told me anecdotes about the students in his most recent class, those he taught at the Institute.

“And I have one who has very big plans. This young man dreams of becoming a Napoleon. This is the goal towards which he directs his actions.”

“Not bad. And what is he doing to bring it about?”

“He lives like an ascetic, he is interested above all in mathematics and tactics and is thinking, after he is awarded his bachelor’s degree, of joining the artillery regiment.”

To which a third person, I think it was the editor, Naumann, added:

“Let’s hope that he makes it to the rank of sergeant.”

This was undoubtedly a correct judgment with respect to the method, but too severe with respect to the young man himself. He lacked only a spark of imagination. In his view, the world was divided into names, the way a garden is divided into terraced plots; he wanted to prosper in one of them. He was unaware of the fact that, if by chance we reach a rank of that kind, in reality we ascend from the humus of the nameless. The grenadiers had a better sense of this; for them the great man was *le petit caporal*.

The lack of imagination is excusable, even necessary. If imagination were ever to prevail, the world would soon resemble a virgin jungle or a madhouse. It needs little people and their sobriety no less than great men. In this sense, it is like a home, where it is more important for the postman and the chimney sweep to come than a Frederick or a Napoleon.

The world lives, therefore, more on the Lesser Transitions and even on the very small ones than on the Great Transitions. On this we agree, which does not exclude a general assessment of the situation.

As for us, there can be no doubt that we find ourselves on the threshold of a Great Transition and that we have already witnessed some of its contours. Furthermore, the preparations are enormous.

When one monarch succeeds another in a dynasty, right down to the last of the Karls, the Fredericks or the Ludwigs, the reign is repeated by way of the order of succession. Persons succeed one another, small and great, among whom the great, for the most part, are dearer to the people than the insignificant ones. There are wars and domestic revolts. To fight for the king, whether against the foreign or the domestic foe, was usually normal.

In the Great Transition, on the other hand, there is a break in the succession, there is a lack of directive lines. It is no longer about persons, borders, ideas, or even gods, as in the wars of religion. Now everything consists in knowing whether the images that are presented correspond to the absolute claim of the Great Return—even in the most advanced posts on the front, there are only presentiments.

Here I find it necessary to once again refer to *The Case of Wagner*. When it comes right down to it, Nietzsche's charges against Wagner cannot be explained on the basis of "sickness", *decadence* or "histrionics". These are nothing but subterfuges. Behind them lies a charge, possible only between Titans: that Wagner has falsified the return!

This is what he wants to say; and it is discernable precisely where it is not distinctly formulated. Nietzsche's central thought, "eternal recurrence", is characterized by utter vagueness. When such imposing waves besiege the heart, it is better that they should remain in the unexpressed instead of being formulated in such categorical terms.

Finally: what is it, in general, that returns in such a transition? Neither dynasties, nor images of animals or gods, nor grandiose conceptions of the world. Absolutely nothing visible or nameable returns—and this is a major point—since nothing returns. Therefore, he wants to say: neither images nor conceptions, but empty concepts, absolute ingenuousness. For an instant the door opens in silence. Then, everything seems to be possible. Hence the restlessness, the expectation, the hopes.

Great purifications help create blank spaces. Dynasties fall like old trees, like dying forests. They are concomitant phenomena; as their simultaneity indicates. Here, no change is worth anything; the time of the princes has passed. The religions have also

gone into decline—not only in the West, but all over the world. Such are the epochs of the downfall of the Fathers, of revolutions and demystification.

The purification ritual forms part of the festival and its preparations: the old image of the world must fall, before a new one can be born. Such times are also the epochs of those who bring fuel to the fire, of despots without dignity or benevolence, but disposing of a monstrous and merciless energy. Colossi with iron faces are either the objects of demoniacal fear, or else they are venerated as gods. These are erroneous inferences: it is not their feet of clay that are making the world tremble.

## 250

How can the silence, the lack of ideas and the lack of expectations of our times be reconciled with the hurricane of history and with the Gnostic anxiety that returns every thousand years concerning the possibility that the world will perish? But the world also returns to the bottom, that is, it submerges, for an instant, in the timeless.<sup>99</sup>

In principle, we can reply that where past and future are concentrated in an instant, it hardly matters what might happen in its vicinity. Archimedes traced his circles while Syracuse burned.

The symbol of John of Patmos is a great one: from the heart of the apocalyptic storm, the Eternal City rises. “Eternal” is only a synonym for that instant where past and future are concentrated.

When the wave of time recedes, it is comparable to a great exhalation—the word comprehends both temporal liberation as well as liberation from time. In that instant, the seed pod bursts, that is: the presupposition for the return of the nameless, which aspires to be embodied in the word.

The wave must unfold its entire impulse until it is completely exhausted. If the crest of a new wave reaches the previous one too soon, a sad mixture of names and images is produced, “new wine in old bottles”, which in the political world is called restoration. This would necessarily be an adulterated return.

## 251

We shall not spend any more time here addressing theological questions. Nonetheless, we shall add yet one more comment: the prophecy of Schubart regarding a Third Christianity, based on the Gospel of John the Baptist, harbors the danger of a falsified return.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> An untranslatable play on words between *zugrunde gehen* (“perish”) and *zu Grunde gehen* (“to go under, to sink”).

<sup>100</sup> Walter Schubart (1897-1941), a German intellectual who was persecuted by both the Nazis as well as by the Russian Bolsheviks, and who was finally declared to have

Demystification is as improper for the priest as high treason is for the soldier. But this kind of prophecy has a positive feature: the strength inherent to the power of Eros. Here, too, the embers of names and dates are slowly burning, while the pure vein of the event comes to light. This also yields, immediately, a profit in time. On the one hand, a disencumbering; on the other, approach.

### ***The surrealist advance patrol***

252

We have already mentioned the fact that Great Transitions are connected with a destruction of forms. In this, they are distinguished from revolutions, where what exists takes a new direction; in Great Transitions, being is affected at a much deeper level than the strata where the change takes place. Formless and indivisible power is extracted from the reserves of the depths and begins to work in its virgin force; in our epoch of change, this is manifested even with respect to matter.

We also mentioned the danger that is associated with the reception of the substance coined in forms. This is not true of revolutions, since here the power of tradition is acting as a retarding moment, as Christianity has always done. In Great Transitions, with the masses of energy that they unleash, the clash and finally the destruction are more violent. It is true that the hope that surprising and totally novel phenomena will occur is *more justified*. Which is the reason why, precisely, political and artistic power must not be implicated too prematurely in definitive formulations.

In such new directions one might expect more from the artist than he is capable of delivering; when the cosmos becomes transparent one can no longer call the constellations by their old names. Here we touch upon the essence of *The Case of Wagner*. . . . According to Nietzsche, Wagner conjures by magical arts the oldest female of the Earth, Erda, only to leave her in the lurch because he was not equal to the experience of her presence.

It is a recurring motif; Djудар the Fisherman could not enter the final chamber, either, the chamber of the ring, without first having ordered the Mother, to whom he was presented, to take off her clothing.

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disappeared after the Soviet siege of Riga, is often quoted in *Radiations*. His essay, *Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky* (1939) inspired *Over the Line*; the second part of *The Peace* opens with a quotation taken from *Europa und die Seele des Ostens* [*Europe and the Soul of the Orient*]: “Not in the even course of the bourgeois world, but in the thunder of the Apocalypse are religions reborn”. [See Ernst Jünger, *The Peace*, tr. Stuart O. Hood, Henry Regnery Company, Hinsdale, Illinois, 1948, p. 35. The “Gospel of St. John the Baptist” to which Jünger refers is the Mandaean Book of John—American translator’s supplementary note.]

The unease with which the elites of society also close their eyes to this transparency is surprising—the elites today are no longer princes, heroes and priests, but the great minds of the physical sciences and the entourage that participates in their spirit. It is self-evident that for them, transparency—as Baader, and to some extent Nietzsche, had already discerned—is an illusion of “the beyond”.

Meanwhile, matter has increased its power and it has been a long time since its depths were finally plumbed; it becomes transparent wherever the spirit manages to approach its immanent power. Transparency can shine, for example, while meditating on a thermodynamic fact like the identity of the melting point and the freezing point.

Knowledge implies approach—we approach the source of the miracle, without ever reaching it, and beyond the field of the nameable. If, as is the case with our epoch, knowledge expands until it attains the dimension of a gigantic sphere, then enigmas are not reduced, but are instead multiplied: the number of reference points that border on the inexplicable, along with the miracle, never ceases to grow.

It has been said that the Greeks should have been able to produce certain results of great utility in the field of experimental physics. Their failure to do so was not due to inability, but to their scorn for a kind of production that, like artisanal labor, was judged to be inaccessible to the Muses.

They were interested in that part of physics that had to be studied in a “sedentary” way, above all by way of mathematical reflection and by astronomical observation in a finite and well ordered universe. Here, too, esthetic intuition still reigned. The stars move according to the harmony of the spheres, and in numbers is concealed divine power.

A grandiose idea, particularly alien to our contemporaries, is that the stars do not exist by themselves, but that they represent emanations of the cosmic light that penetrates the celestial vault as if it was radiated throughout its pores and eyes and that, in its plenitude, exceeds our sensory capacity. We would be consumed by it, like Phaethon. There is still a place where the higher reality of this image of the world is communicated to us: the Pantheon in Rome. Let us hope that it will someday be rid of its Christian ingredients.

Hephaestus—Vulcan to the Romans—was counted among the lesser gods; he was thrown out of Olympus because of his deformity. His lame foot also constituted a motif that goes beyond the anecdotal. It is one of the far-sighted or telluric-sighted coordinates by which myth is distinguished. Lameness is, among other things, a stigma of blacksmiths, who in part even belong to the subterranean world and on whose smoke-blackened doorsteps they forge many types of a surprising variety of weapons and tools. They are also



magicians, capable, like Daedalus and Wieland, of the mastery of the air under their wings, but their works become doubtful in the light of Apollo, as is the case wherever one knows how to distinguish between art and prestidigitation.

It is true that the power of the world of automated machines should not be underestimated; the pleasure that it arouses is reminiscent of primitive dances in their naive happiness and their spiritual onanism.

The mythical figure of the cripple maintains relations of correspondence with the one-eyed figure of the Cyclops, which does not exclude a particular sharpness of vision, despite the fact that his depth perception is limited. The Cyclops sees, thinks and works along a single simple path and, despite his good will, is hardly skilled in questions of law and morality. This is visible in his quarrels with his kind, for even though the solution is obvious, they are indefinitely prolonged.

I was recently reminded of this question of lameness during a re-broadcast of the second moon landing. As everyone knows, one of the astronauts stumbled as he was making a leap that was not foreseen by the computers. This suggested related combinations. They often occur precisely due to technical malfunctions, as if caves were opened up for pseudo-metamorphoses. The raw material vanishes, but it preserves its form. The sinking of the *Titanic* constitutes the model.

Otherwise, how does one explain the feeling of unreality due to which, during such broadcasts, we find ourselves more absent than present? The actuality is insuperable, and just for that reason devours reality. After long lapses of time I had to call myself to order, like someone who participates in a spiritual séance, even preferring to read a book instead.

The fantastic character of such phenomena is even more powerfully reinforced by their extraordinary faithfulness. This faithfulness does not reside in nature, or in the Moon, or in the Universe, but in vision. It is not the desert that is ugly, but that which “conceals deserts”.

## 256

The beauty of the desert has been recognized by many spirits of our century, particularly by the French *troupiers* who spent long stretches of their lives there and were deeply affected by the experience.

This beauty still reflects or projects the reticulum distinctly enough, that is, the constellation of the smallest particles that repose on the very bottom of the undifferentiated. Here one finds the grains of sand. The wind works with them like an artist who sculpts a statue. Their secrets are revealed when they are expanded to a disproportionate scale. It is a general precondition for all esthetics that the reticulum contributes the criterion for measurement. The wave is the same both in the ray of light as

it is in the wave emitted by the eruption of Krakatoa. This identity is the ineluctable presupposition for all representation.

Beauty and reason are still related by an intimate bond; the forms are rigorous, and often even of a mathematical precision. The same principle prevails for the peoples of the deserts, for the way they think, for the way they move, for their weapons, for their tools, and also for the wells they meticulously dig in the depths of the subsoil.

How is it possible that the new kinds of wells, whose platforms have sprouted up in the desert like mushrooms, have not been adopted? The world of beams, of steel girders and empty jam jars, with its lights, its odors and its sounds, is foreign to the desert.

In the landscape of workshops, the reticulum is projected obliquely. Which is where the uninterrupted attacks come from, which radiate in all domains, particularly in that of higher intuition. Undoubtedly the force field will oscillate, with or without the collaboration of the human being. Science, which also serves as orientation for theology, is incapable of that.

Only the artist remains, who still has to entrust himself to the production or, more accurately, to the radical creation of valid models. In the poet, nature even bursts from the wellspring of the undifferentiated and dispenses wealth, while science establishes itself on wealth and consumption. These are distances.

## 257

The inclusion of technical substance fixed in the work of art represents a particular problem, the domain of the rational structure by way of the spirit of the Muses. From a theoretical point of view it would not be impossible, since art drinks from deeper springs.

The dissolution, the incipient destruction, but also the peculiar rejuvenation, of technical phenomena now takes place, wherever the uncanny begins to glow beneath the value of utility and comfort. The seal of the bottle has been broken; the genie rises, like a cloud of smoke, to the firmament. I have among my correspondence a sketch by Magritte, the depiction of a landscape over which atomic mushroom clouds sprout like the jets of geysers, Titanic brains in the form of grayish clouds, in a majestic solitude.

In this respect, magic and surrealism offer, in general, a gold mine of discoveries. When De Chirico attempted to destroy the works of his *pittura metafisica* period, this was not directed against his own power. Thus, we are not pleased to recall a love affair that almost cost us our skin. We notice the *élan* prematurely. We bet too much on a single card. Here, the transparency of technology shows through—a new millennium of glacial and irreversible urbanization. Against this, Mexico is good, as is announced in a long walk through the halls of images.

In the surrealists, the sinister did not take long to spread. This is already true of their Patriarchs: Poe, Lautremont, Kleist, Emily Bronte, Sade. Their magazine, *Minotaure*,

provides a good overview. If such spirits represent the law, evolution has already come to an end. Artists recognized this very early; this recognition also marks their fates.

This must not be understood as a pejorative comment; to the contrary. Surrealism offers the example of an approach that certainly leads, precociously, to crystallization. It is a first attempt by the man of art to tame the world of technology and its ugliness, returning to the spirit—an attempt that does not exclude the landscape of the workshop in order to preserve an idyllic vision, but which incorporates its constructs, its physiognomy and its dangers. The power of this enterprise can now be recognized because it knew how to charge the fixed fragments of this world with the spirit of the image, and to grasp them (and not only by way of color). Thus, for example, the montages of Max Ernst (1891-1976). The history of culture indicates that in his work “irrational associations are established between forms of nature and the accessories of civilization”. This can also be expressed more simply.

The drilling rig in the Sahara, its skeleton, its girders or, in Heidegger’s terms, its “positional structure”, its *Gestell*, can be tamed and, of course, by way of intuition, in such a way that it acquires the necessary density and sovereignty. This precedes the phenomena, it guides their dance. Not in vain did the surrealists pay so much attention since the beginning of their movement to ecstatic intoxication and dreams. There, the spirit reaches a frontier in whose vicinity time begins to splinter and to tremble on its foundations. It thus becomes dubious and, therefore, rich as a mine: such perceptions precede the dissolution of images and therefore the change of style. The internal clock now keeps a different kind of time. Hence the fact that it is not even images—images in the sense of works of art—that are the first phenomena that one notices. It is, rather, the old and eternally new way through which life represents time and the temporal and to which it must be limited, without entailing any loss: the dance. Even in our days there is nothing that makes us as profoundly uneasy, or which is understood so superficially. With the growing monotony it is becoming more difficult to follow the impulse of the heart; hence the increasing incidence of accidents, heart attacks and psychoses.

Once again, we have touched upon a topic that threatens to lead us far astray; it would be better to just add a note on the work of Max Ernst. To make the foundations of time tremble, you need only unite in a single image two strata that do not fit together. This gives rise to an antichronistic current. This explains the influence of the woodcuts, old and in part absurd, in the *papier collés*.

This effect is of a very universal and primitive nature. It causes surprise wherever the world is beginning to undergo an inversion—in the penumbra previous to the immersion in dream and in the change of seasons, particularly wherever the death of the winter and the imminence of the spring are celebrated with masquerades. Being masks itself with time and times, but we do not discover what is hidden behind the masks, for when we unmask it, we are left with a mask in our hands. It tricked us, now we are dazzled by a new fashion, a new face.

This, however, i.e.: to put ourselves into a position to reach the place from which to see, if not what changes, at least its changes, is approach. Here the paths diverge: one is upset by the fall of the mask, or makes fun of it; the other succumbs to the fascination of the new mask. Meanwhile, as in the Etruscan tombs, there is still a third perspective: the serene contemplation of the ephemeral.

What is included today—with fashionable verbiage—under the term of “demystification”, is in fact contemporary in the highest degree, but only insofar as the problem of time is represented as such—the sphinx which has asked its question and will pose it, yesterday and today, and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. Here there are neither plans nor programs, neither safes nor recipes; at any time, in a solemn hour, when being is stripped of its mask, this question is directed at the individual. It cannot be a bad thing that, now and then, his ears prick up before the door leading to the antechambers.

## 258

The triumph of the power of the spirit over time, its incorporation on a first plane, is an endless task. Before all claims it is necessary to examine to what extent a breach has been made and, thus, an approach. A history of culture that disposes with this consideration leads, most of the time, to esthetic differentiations.

In fact, it is not true that the power hidden behind the questions of time and fashions was not perceived, even when the ability to locate it was lacking. Frequently, the artist himself is hardly conscious of it. However, it is in the public domain that “something has happened to him”. This “something” can shock some and instill others with enthusiasm, and it can also spread by word of mouth like a new secret.

Where is this “something” that moves far below differences, and which the enemy himself compels us to admire? In any case, it must be stronger than time—it now speaks in its favor that, like salt that does not lose its taste, it assures the duration of the work of art; which—and here we approach once again the indeterminate and the uncertain—does not always have anything to do with the rank of the work. It can happen that a single painting or a single poem survives, and perhaps not the best one. It can shine in the fragments, in the weak points, like a reminiscence of instants when the universe confirmed its validity. It can also remain in the invisible: in dreams, in nostalgia, in failure, and, nonetheless, act—precisely there. Brilliance can accumulate and concentrate in certain individuals, but there are vestiges shared everywhere. Grace, rather than merit, pertains to achievement.

Naturally, sooner or later every work of art must perish. However, that which passed silently by the word and the image, as by the tombs of Tarquinia, remains inaccessible. This touches us. That which we call immortal is ephemeral, but is nonetheless a reflection of the immortal.

When we walk through the snow on a sunny day like today, February 1, 1970, sometimes we can see one of the crystals of snow glitter like a diamond. In one of its myriads of forms we get a glimpse of the reserves of heat that lie dormant in the eternal ice.

259

The advance patrol of surrealism is instructive; painters and poets are very capable. If a painter like De Chirico could manage to empty any house on the shores of the Mediterranean, strip it of its meaning through the reduction of its chromatic quality to pure white, he not only demystifies it, but also dehumanizes it, he dissociates it into its atoms and then recharges it, at the same time that he does this, he throws a magic net over the *skyline* of New York. He would have then returned to the reticulum and would have exchanged an entire truckload of limestone and bricks for an atom of color. This is still a model on paper or on canvas, but behind it there is something more than cities and works of art.

## Mexico

### *Dilated pupils*

260

From Europe and the East to Mexico—the leap is notable not only in space but also in time; and also from a biographical point of view, for it entails a distance of thirty years—for that was the interval between the temporary cessation and the resumption of the experiment.

Thirty years had passed since I dropped the red hot frying pan with which I had scorched myself. In every life there are cliffs whose precipices paralyze us, with greater or lesser violence, and then cause us to come back to the edge again; they make us savor, in anticipation, the final “plunge”. That is when we throw the superfluous ballast overboard and “pull ourselves together”, as Hamann did after his nervous breakdown in London. Morally, the *maladie de relais* is also created. We fill our sails with a fresh wind.

My unfortunate experience of excess in Halle caused me to have a brush with catastrophe and, thus, one of the most profound points of the spring of health. Some fortunate circumstances made their contribution. Thus, to mention one detail, it was favorable for me that food poisoning caused by fish should call for the prescription of strong coffee as an antidote. Such intoxications are lethal, and they are all the more perfidious to the extent that the toxins are already present even before the fish has begun to smell bad.

Only at that moment did I discover from practical experience that coffee is also indicated to treat cannabis intoxication, although I only understood it theoretically after reading about it in a book. Since both the drug and the remedy are stimulants, one would instead have presumed that this would produce an extremely disastrous synergetic effect. The

paradox is probably explained by the fact that various depressive currents enter into play under the surface of such intoxicated states.

There was another favorable circumstance: on that afternoon, an atmosphere that was in part agitated and in part depressed reigned among the guests at the hotel, which is why I was protected by a kind of sociological camouflage that mitigated the inopportune turn taken by my reaction; it made it less suspicious. I had already witnessed such scenes on several occasions, without participating in them, and it cannot be said that one would find edifying reasons for their occurrence.

When we deviate from the dominant opinions of society and its *behaviour*,<sup>101</sup> we should keep it secret. An easy precept to follow when one is planning to rob a bank, but one that is hard to follow when it is a matter of excursions, voluntary or involuntary, to the border lands of the spirit. Collective rejection is certainly softer, but also more consistent, than rejection due to violations of the law. The individual is subjected to close scrutiny, and his career choices and opportunities are severely constrained. All that is needed is a minor transgression to transform him into a suspect or to ruin him.

## 261

This experience will be corroborated by anyone who has worked in an office for years or decades, and who has become integrated into a circle of intelligent co-workers. Fates are allocated, as when a fleet whose departure from port is carried out in good order weighs anchor. The ships have already been inspected and selected. Then, however, one of them deviates from the line and can no longer remain in formation, and others disappear forever. Every Christmas, one or two of the old comrades fails to attend the party. Illnesses, traffic accidents, amorous or matrimonial conflicts, sudden or simmering breaks—when it comes right down to it, each person is the craftsman of his own ruin, although in his own particular way.

It is in this context that I must mention the chief of the department, who kept a bottle of cognac hidden in the lower left hand drawer of his desk, and continued to do so right up to the day he retired. As the years passed, his ideas and his character unraveled. He performed many tasks cheerfully enough; but his confidence in his own forces with respect to certain operations diminished. His nervous secretary, whom he thrilled with his ideas at noon but depressed by evening, soon became unbearable to him. Then, he would often disappear for a moment and return in a cheerful mood; which would not last for very long. A case like that of my friend, Dr. Zerner, who dealt with his schizophrenia until he was sixty years old, and even acted with restraint, constitutes an exception.

When and where one may drink is something that one knew quite well long before there were any Volkswagens. Compared with this knowledge, the question of quantity was considered as one of little importance—“he can really hold his liquor” was an expression

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<sup>101</sup> In English in the original—American translator’s note.

that connoted praise. That drinking reveals character, that is, “real” character, and that ultimately it makes the type appear from the phenotype, is an unquestionable fact.

Drinking at the wrong place and wrong time has always been viewed as if it were a crime. “He came to work after one glass too many”: this might be allowed to pass once, but not again. That is how Johann Christian Günther made his own job as Court Poet the butt of his jokes.

“He wasn’t drunk, he’s just crazy.” Often, this is also the case. Anyone who, amidst the affairs of everyday life, loses his sense of spatial and temporal orientation for a few seconds, or who disturbs others because of his absurd actions, usually disappears forever, or is repatriated to the common consciousness in the most disagreeable way. In this sense, too, it is worth it to read the second chapter of *The Demons*: “... the wild beast showed his claws.”

## 262

The types of people with dilated pupils soon arouse mistrust. In the evening, when others have “friendly” get-togethers, you seldom see them. Their appearance causes surprise; they have more accidents than other people. They are viewed with disfavor, the debits against their accounts are always mounting higher in the social, economic and technical realms.

It is nonetheless likely that they have a role to play in the universe: they are not lacking in any habitats, in none of the great families of animals and plants. They live under rocks, in caves and grottoes, in the soil of jungles and the ocean depths, in the shadows, with big, dark eyes—and also blind, but gifted with extremely subtle senses, when night falls. They have their own particular arsenal: the sensitive whiskers of cats, the silent, velvety wings of butterflies and bats, tentacles and antennae with fantastic forms, pale skins that are hypersensitive to a single ray from the sun, a sense of hearing that can detect the softest sounds, an extremely sensitive sense of smell, organs created for nocturnal flight. Among these creatures, the night is enjoyed as if it were a festival.

It is common for tentacles to account for one third of a creature’s weight. In the human realm, the nocturnal type represents a limiting case. He does not dare to leave his home before nightfall, when he seeks out his kind, his comrades and their playgrounds.

Thus, Maurice de Guérin felt attracted by Novalis, and Baudelaire by De Quincey and Edgar Allan Poe. However, the nocturnal type also exercises his power of attraction in the clearest light, in the Great Noonday. Thus, Byron seduced Goethe; he communed with the dark side.

Night is as indispensable to the human spirit as dreaming is to the body. In genetics there is also a series of dark codes: this acts decisively on our image, on our fate. In this respect, it is possible that this brief *excursus* has not been superfluous: as a delimitation of a moral prejudice that, I must confess, is necessary for the clarification of our social

condition. The situation changes when we contemplate the very character, the *daimon*, of the human being, as an *image*. It is precisely here where the divergence takes on value—although we do not reach equilibrium: this is reflected in the splendor and the misery of the *poètes maudits*. If we take one more step, everything is converted into a figure of fate: the drunken Verlaine in the Luxembourg Gardens, which today features his statue, and the street urchins who run after him. There is a point of view from which every crime and every misdeed becomes a service. But it is undoubtedly not advisable to grant *cartes blanches* for such acts.

## Substitutes

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I will not attempt to approach my Mexican excursions from a chronological point of view, if only because my experiences have not yet concluded. Besides, Mexico, whose soil has given birth to such prodigious fruits, must be understood in this context as a spiritual rather than as a geographical unity.

We must not close ourselves off from science, but take full advantage of it. Precisely in these frontier zones we must approach, now and then, the data of the specialists, which I had ignored with respect to hashish.

In this case, the doubt arises whether “Mexican” is the right word to classify three substances (mescaline, psilocybin and LSD) that produce similar affects (hallucinogenic and psychotropic). It is true that the cactus, *Lophophora*, and the mushroom, *psilocybe*, come from Mexico; ergot of rye, however, from which Albert Hofmann synthesized LSD, comes from Europe. It was obvious that the time had come—this is an example of the sudden and universal spread of a laboratory experiment to consumption.

If there is anyone who could provide me with information about this field it was Albert Hofmann, well versed in both the oneiric as well as the molecular realm. So I just called him on the telephone at his home in the Swiss village of Rittimatte, and for my peace of mind he has explained that, with regard to this point, we should distinguish between lysergic acid, the name by which LSD is often erroneously designated,<sup>102</sup> and the diethylamide of lysergic acid that he synthesized. Lysergic acid alone does not cause any hallucinogenic effects. The diethylamide group must be contained in the molecule for it to produce such an effect.

On the other hand, LSD is very closely related, even with regard to its effects, to the amide of lysergic acid, the principal active ingredient of a Mexican “magic drug”, *ololiuhqui*; it was already mentioned by Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Franciscan

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<sup>102</sup> *Lysergsäurediäthylamid* or LSD is a feminine term in both German and Spanish, while in this book we usually use the masculine form, due to the erroneous belief that the acronym designates “the” lysergic acid and not, as is correct, “the” diethylamide of lysergic acid.



Father Bernardino de Sahagún wrote in his famous *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* [General History of the Things of New Spain]: “There is an herb, called *coatl xoxouhqui* (green snake), which produces seeds that are called *ololiuhqui*. These seeds stupefy and deprive one of reason: they are taken as a potion.”

An engraving accompanies a very precise description of the plant; it seems that the Father only saw the plant’s buds before they had bloomed. It was not until quite recently that it was determined to be a member of the *Convolvulaceae* family: *Ipomoea violacea*. In our gardens we also cultivate some relatives of this plant, the morning glory, the *bella del giorno* of the Italians, which blooms for only a few hours. I plant them here in Wilflingen every year, along a decaying wooden fence.

It was once thought that the domains of the alkaloids of lysergic acid were restricted to the lesser fungi, particularly to ergot of rye. The fact that its existence has recently been discovered in the realm of magical drugs as well, and therefore in the juices of a higher plant, was a big surprise to the phytochemists, those highly specialized descendants of the shamans and witch doctors of old, to whom the powers and virtues of plants are revealed, in part thanks to experience, and in part thanks to clairvoyant enlightenment.

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Such clairvoyance goes back to the epoch of the centaurs, especially to Chiron, the tutor of the gods who initiated Aesculapius in the art of medicine and to whom Hölderlin dedicated a great poem that has yet to be fully appreciated:

For then I’d look for herbs of the wood, and on  
The hillside hear soft game; and never in vain.  
(...)  
(...) And of the crocus, thyme  
And corn the Earth would pick the first bunch for me.  
And in the cool of stars I learned, but  
Only the nameable. Disenchanting  
(...)  
Now here alone I sit in silence (...)  
poison divides us now....

Therefore, there is only a science of the nameable, and thought is pure poison—we have to resign ourselves to this in epochs when the nameable is only worth anything if it can be reduced to the quantifiable.

Hölderlin rebelled against this tendency even at a very early period. It has become fashionable to quote him, but what one hears said of him is as reliable as street rumors. “Quelle clarté”, this is still an atmospheric appreciation; but now there is movement afoot to politicize Hölderlin.

He offers us an example of an approach such as was never attained in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even among the Germans. He does not return to the Olympian gods, but conjures them to the festival, as sworn witnesses—and this is precisely what Wagner was incapable of doing when he evoked the Aesir. The latter remained independent; the word did not pass through, or much less beyond them, but remained under their domain. This is the source of evil, not in the people of the Lemures.

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In those days nature spoke directly to the senses, not because the senses were more sensitive, but because they were less differentiated and therefore the undifferentiated essence of the earth was united with the undifferentiated essence of the human being—without reflection, without thoughts. This explains, among other things, why the great medicinal plants were already known at a very early epoch.

Even in the Middle Ages, things addressed us without intermediaries. This is possible in any epoch in which approach is attained. During the great epidemics the names of medicinal plants resound, or birds bring them to human beings.

Today, all of this has changed. Long ago, the reticulum glittered in the darkness of the forest—now, in the clear light of consciousness, we must *ourselves* approach it, even if the amazement is the same. The world is still miraculous.

When Albert Hofmann began to research ergot of rye, his intention was to discover a drug for blood circulation; the fungus had long been familiar to both mainstream medicine and folk medicine. The discovery of the psycho-pharmaceutical was not deliberate and it was indeed unexpected, as if a door had been opened to a unique vision. The price of admittance was serious intoxication.

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There are chemical and botanical relationships that speak in favor of the inclusion of LSD in the “Mexican” category. This clarification pertains to the behavior of the major families of plants, which are as cosmopolitan as they are faithful to their native soil.

Thus, there are ecstatic intoxications that, although originally rooted in a distant country, end up being widely disseminated—as if the wind transported their seeds from far away. Chemical classification is more methodical, but also more crude; it follows, without managing to equal, the refinement of the botanical world.

It could also be said that chemistry extracts its crystals from the bottom of a reticulum of dense netting. The pigeonholes of its formulas delimit matter with extreme detail. That is why there is a constant ongoing project to revise the borders of its classificatory system. Thus, more than a thousand isotopes have been “discovered”, some stable and others unstable. For the precision-oriented spirit of the 19<sup>th</sup> century these aberrations were as annoying as the ones that had also afflicted zoology. If construction materials change

with regard to their measurements and weights, the safety that used to be taken for granted comes to an end. Starting in 1898, the house not only began to burn slowly, but also to collapse; its seismographic sensitivity increased. It is, of course, true that by way of this destructive process, forces are liberated—perhaps even more than are necessary.

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Therefore, when we use the adjective, “Mexican”, we are only marginally referring to a chemical, botanical or geographic affinity. The main reason we use it is the distinctive feature of the ecstatic intoxication in question, its remoteness from the measurable and quantifiable world and consequently, its characteristic of approach.

The key can be made with greater or lesser art, it can even be crude; all it needs to do is unlock and open the door. Then we can leave it in the lock, or throw it away. One word might be enough, like “sesame” at the cave of Ali Baba. Today, the doors open when a ray of light breaks through. The body crosses it. It, too, belongs to the domain of the “nameable”.

If I ride a destrier to the cave of treasure, I have no other choice than to dismount before entering the cave. The destrier cannot enter; I can use him when I return with the loot.

I know: words like “destrier” and “dismount” sound old-fashioned—they must therefore be read *cum grano salis*: they can be replaced by any other words and, as far as possible, by expressions as highly regarded, for example, as “apparatus”. In critical situations, we are compelled not only to get out of our cars, airplanes and rockets, but also to exit from the State, society and our families, and even to shed our clothing. This is the frontier before which everything apprehensible, in general with names, and therefore the “nameable”, becomes sterile.

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The question of whether or not LSD belongs to Mexico therefore concerns the key and how it is cut. Its legitimacy is another question altogether. This word must not be understood in this context in the juridical or moral sense, but it pertains rather to the conscience, to the self-jurisdiction of the individual who is conscious of his responsibility.

The charge that we are dealing with substitutes is an obvious one. The response: Is there anything on Earth that is not a substitute? For the Romans, *surrogare* meant to choose one person to act in the place of another, or to allow someone to make such a choice; it was a political concept. The world is imperfect: this is one of the few commonplace sayings to which we all subscribe. Consequently, an idea of perfection must exist. This inhabits the realm of the ineffable.

The prisoner in his cell is especially sensitive to this imperfection; his situation may serve as a model. For example, the situation of Eldridge Cleaver in the California State Prison

system (1954); a fourteen year old black youth, he was sentenced to prison because marijuana was found in his house. Naturally, he missed his girlfriend and, in her place, he put a photo of a *pin-up girl* [in English in the original] on the wall of his cell. He chose one person instead of another: this is a substitute, a fetish, a replacement. “Out of the center of *Esquire*, I married a voluptuous bride.” Was this photograph only a substitute for his girlfriend or for the movie star that it depicted? Was it legitimate, therefore, for him to have a photo of a white woman pinned to his cell wall so that he could feel close to his black girlfriend? Does this not transform both the white girl and the black girl, along with their images, into substitutes? In such a situation, realism, materialism and idealism all come together. Even the prison guard noticed that something did not add up here; he tore the photo down from the wall and tossed it into the toilet. A contribution to the debate on iconoclasm.

I have taken this detail from a biography (*Soul on Ice*, 1969) that I was reading today, Saint Sylvester’s Day. The author is trenchant and insistent in his views. The “rulers of the land”, whom he considered to be inveterate drunks, locked him up because he smoked marijuana. “I had been getting high for four or five years and was convinced, with the zeal of a crusader, that marijuana was superior to lush....”

Nor did he have a lot of respect for those types who praise the authentic at the expense of substitutes. “Such men of God are powerful arguments in favor of atheism.” A man does not suck his thumb, and he is not content with the slogans invented by modern theology (“God is good”).

And then desperation reared its head, because he was so horrified by his situation that he was “hard-up enough to suck my grandmother’s old withered tits”—certainly a good image for those tortuous approaches in which old Gaia appears as a scrawny old hag.

Up to this point I have been addressing substitutes—they are notes from no-man’s land. In the end, everything is a stand-in for everything else. We are even obliged to pass through our father and our mother, if the door must be opened.

The “real ring” is undiscoverable, and “at bottom” or “in the last instance”, it, too, is a substitute.

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What is the “authentic”? It is simultaneously the insufficient, that which is provided by time, and that which time once again takes back. Even “the end” [*das Letzthinnige*] (Schleiermacher) is still something that indicates something else.

Furthermore, an image from ballistics: in his anxiety, in his indeterminate yearning, the human being is the marksman at the shooting range. He is seeking fulfillment in the nameless, that is where his target is. In order to correct his aim, he needs what the marksman calls his “crosshairs”; the nameable, as a substitute, is indispensable.

Since the nameless intervenes in the process of aiming at the shooting range, quality ceases to be important. Here, all differences disappear—for example, the differences between a statue made by Michelangelo and a cheap plaster figure. We can gaze upon the Cathedral of Milan or the Pyramids of Giza with the same delight with which we look at a snowflake in the winter forest, which melts under our breath. Dulcinea del Toboso is no less worthy of a toast than the divine Helen, and the Knight of the Sad Countenance is, perhaps, closer to the goal than the Paris *playboy* [in English in the original—American translator’s note]: he is closer to the nameless.

They are modifications—the diamond does not display anything more than what carbon is capable of revealing with its miraculous energy. We find things of the same kind in the desert and we take them with us as fetishes. At bottom, any pebble possesses the same beauty and the same energy.

This is our theme: to place man in an upright position with respect to the universe—this is more important than increasing his knowledge. Educational programs like those which are now being introduced to reform the university open up perspectives on an unreal world, a world with more robots, more boredom, and more suicides—you do not need to be a prophet to predict these things. This is the style of the intelligent and fatuous directors of warehouses of commodities, who transfer knowledge from one place to another as if it were sacks of potatoes. Nonetheless, there are still individuals who do not content themselves with pre-masticated fodder and this world of rails and cubicles. Spirits go their separate ways.

### *Chinese gardens*

I had not yet done justice to LSD. I said to Albert Hofmann: “It is nothing but a housecat compared to the real tiger, mescaline, or at most a leopard.” I spoke these words after coming down from a “trip” on acid that we had taken long before this drug acquired so much fame and such a bad reputation. It was obvious that it had shown us its velvet skin rather than its claws and that it had purred rather than roared at us. The dose was too small; I had mistaken a serenade in the lobby for the real performance. We therefore wanted to repeat the voyage with sufficient cargo; it was to take place before the conclusion of this manuscript.

It must have been during the spring; in the meadows of Bottmingen the anemones were already blooming, but the winter had not yet entirely come to an end, since Anita, Albert’s wife, had gone to the mountains to ski with the children. We therefore had the whole kingdom to ourselves: Albert Hofmann, as guide; Heribert Konzett, a pharmacologist, who at the time had not yet moved to Innsbruck; and I, a mere layman when it came to the fine points of chemistry, who had come from nearby Binningen.

The preparations allowed one to understand that, here, exact science was at home: a large tapering beaker, full of distilled water, was standing on the table. Our guide, as symposiarch, administered our doses with an eyedropper full of a colorless liquid, which dissolved immediately.

So, too, did the ancients dilute their wine with water so that the banquet would last longer. Their pitchers containing the mixture were decorated with wreaths of grape and laurel leaves and, above all, with mythical scenes that would have been familiar to all the guests. On our beaker, the only inscriptions indicated liquid measures.

Each of us received a small cup, hardly bigger than a shot glass, full of liquid poured from the beaker. We made a toast and wished each other *bon voyage*. The house was nice and warm; we made ourselves comfortable on the couch. In the street, very close to the window, cars and trucks were passing by. The noise was at first annoying, but then it receded. Colors got brighter, as if the Nubian sun had begun to shine or as if matter was radiating more intensely. It seemed to me as if, up until that moment, I had only perceived shadows of the light; now everything became essential. Even when I closed my eyes the colors did not cease to shine.

Then I began to feel warmth and peace, and also silence, only interrupted by deep and pleasurable breathing.

“Now I forget my business affairs.”

“My worries.”

“My job.”

“My family.”

“I have even left myself.”

“Let’s leave all of this behind us.”

“Even the atoms—now nothing matters.”

We had taken off our shoes; it was an excursion for which neither shoes nor boots, neither wheels nor wings, were necessary. Our guide lit a stick of incense. The smoke rose, and formed a silken thread whose grey color metamorphosed into the most subtle of blues. At first it rose vertically in the almost motionless air. But then it began to tremble, to revolve and undulate, in a play of weightless shapes. It seemed to reveal the meaning of the dance and its offering. Here, matter and motion, vestments and body almost merged. Being and appearance overlapped almost without leaving a gap between them and consequently so did vision and phenomena. Were my eyes fascinated by the object, or did my eyes conjure the object? I could not tell; besides, it did not matter. To speculate about it was pure illusion.

A circle, a first movement of the dance, may even have preceded everything. What was at first separated was reunited in broad symmetries: up and down, the crest and the trough of the wave, lingam and yoni, father and mother, power and spirit. However artistically they may be interwoven and however dangerous these figures may be, their guides are the reminiscence of and the nostalgia for the reestablishment of the primordial unity.

An offering of incense. Its interpretation is, as always, the responsibility of the augur. I have described this threading smoke in another context, and I will return to it later.

The ashes fell while we followed the play and now and then we noted a turn that seemed particularly accomplished. We were *in high spirits*: light.

“Light”, a state that intensifies space. It is not based on “more space”, but on “mere space”; that is: the vacuum grows. Not only is the superfluous set aside, but so too is almost everything that seems important to us. After a profound dream that successfully canceled all differences, in the morning we dance down the stairs: light, cheerful, without purpose. The hall is cleared before the dance begins. Only one thin wall, a membrane, separates us from the real world.

We approach the window on the other side of the room from the street and look at the meadow below. This meadow had in the meantime taken on a great splendor, as if in the interim a team of Chinese gardeners had set to work on it. Not only had they created a great painting, but they had attended to even the least detail; perhaps they had delegated armies of ants to work on the stems of the grass and the grains of dust. And this was a crude kind of labor compared to the powerful work of the light, which radiated ceaselessly.

Now everything was in repose; the best gardener is the one whose labor is not noticed. His desire is that the world should crystallize in an image. Then time also rests. It had been some time since we had ceased to hear the noise of the traffic in the street.

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We must have been looking at the meadow and enjoying its silence for a long time, until we felt tired and we went to lie down and enjoy a brief but deep sleep. Then came the burgundy that our guide had kept at room temperature in the kitchen. We had come down to earth; but our good cheer persisted.

It had been a brief trip, from which we nonetheless returned with something more than the memory of a fleeting vision. This is not inconsequential. In this case it was an exquisite sensitivity that persevered for weeks and months, and perhaps for even longer, with which a sharpening of the sense of judgment was also connected. This was revealed to me when I contemplated pictorial and architectural works, that is, when considering questions of style. Like “absolute hearing”, it is not something that is always beneficial.

This can be explained, from a “spatial” perspective, because we approach the reticulum and, ultimately, because we have become—in the work of art, for example—more sensitive to the twists and turns of its manifestations. The fact that mathematical figures do not bother us in this way is due to the fact that in them the reticulum is manifested with greater distinctness—thus, for example, the point in the circle or the microscopic structure of matter in a crystal. This is situated beyond the order of esthetic values, it harbors no relation with them. Therefore, the painter will take care not to include in his paintings figures that—from a geometric point of view—are irreproachably perfect. The frame constitutes an exception; here, exact measurements are even a requirement.

In every painting we must precisely distinguish what can be contributed by technique and what aspects of technique detract from the work—which is what cannot be produced.

The question can also be posed concerning every house, every architectural work, and this presupposes very ancient ramifications. On the other hand, the shells of periwinkles, and even of *Globigerinida*, will have a completely different aspect. The undifferentiated is incorporated into the forms.

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Now we shall take a look at our theme from the personal angle. The critical spirit becomes more acute when we penetrate into lower strata or layers that have been displaced from reality. We enjoy the trip beyond the line onboard a luxury yacht. The service was so exquisite that we hardly even noticed it. Five *stewards* stood by to satisfy all our desires; a *chef de service* supervised and harmonized their activity.

In the tropics we had to transfer to another ship. Here, too, there was nothing to object to in the way we were treated. In any event, it was not comparable to the previous ship; there we had experienced an *optimum*.

These are questions of style. The way we used our five senses and our consciousness did not lead beyond approaches, where proximity meant less than the linearity of the intention, which we used to call “faith”. Any plane can become oblique.

The image of a luxury yacht might lead to the mistaken notion that approach is equivalent to rising up in the hierarchy, or to refinement. The truth is rather the contrary. On elevated planes, at a distance from the reticulum, the risk of obliqueness also increases, and consequently it also gets harder to remain upright—equilibrium requires the skill of a tightrope walker. It is hard to learn, sometimes it is only acquired after generations, through inheritance.

To give with just discretion, to work righteously, to know how to judge, becomes an enormous task the higher one rises. In this respect, consider Matthew 19:23: “Verily, I say unto you: it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven!” In general, this whole chapter is instructive with regard to the reduction of ethical problems to pure structural forms. Verse 8: “... at first it was not like this.” In those times, wealth had not



yet been divided. Every attempt to link power and justice, power and the spirit, therefore points towards a restoration.

The hidden fibers of the undifferentiated are found throughout the realm of diversity. “Bread” informs the meaning of the food of rich and poor, it becomes synonymous with every gift, it is even converted into a sacrament. Thus, “the word” is also found in every language.

If I had the impression that LSD, contemplated as a vehicle, does not transport one beyond the antechambers, which are nonetheless decorated with very exquisite taste, I had undoubtedly undergone experiences that provided a basis for this notion. And so it was; I began this Mexican section with the most pleasant memory. This does not presuppose any objection to the acuteness of the esthetic judgment, although it has not made my stay in a society organized according to merely economic-dynamic principles any more agreeable. Here one proceeds more easily if one has a thick skin.

Albert Hofmann was probably right when he said that the dose had been too small. We had discussed the idea and agreed on several occasions to undertake a second excursion; the last time we spoke was in December. Twice our plans were postponed by the flu, then by snow-covered roads and an automobile accident: small signs in favor of the suspicion that the right moment had not yet arrived.

In any event, our first venture had also taught us some lessons—especially in the way that it had cast the qualities in their mutual opposition into such powerful contrast and instilled them with so much life. There is a big difference between perceiving mere properties or qualities: in the latter case one not only perceives the object, but also its “charge”. The world is still the same but the nature of perception can decide between the calling of a natural artist and the job of a house painter. Here, training does not help. Even so, an initiation might perhaps instill one with respect for the mystery of light and colors.

In dreams we also see objects that have been freed from their everyday properties and have gained quality. The world acquires a twilight aura. Things still preserve approximately their usual contours, but not their status and their names; at the same time, they radiate more energy. The night recharges them. If they were to acquire more energy, we would leave the realm of dreams and penetrate a new reality.

This is what is gained from approach that goes halfway: that the rising tide of being inundates the world with greater force. If we proceed beyond qualities, dreams, heroes and gods, then the risk increases. The benefit can become ineffable—but then it is also incommunicable. Nonetheless, the “having once been there” can transform the human being in such a way that it remains hidden to him, and does not penetrate into his consciousness.

This is also true of serious illnesses, very profound ecstatic intoxications, and epileptic attacks, which can be followed by a glimpse of the resurrection. In artists, a change of

style. Not only is there an organ of generation, but there is also an organ of creation. Here one approaches the undivided world. This is how the great founders returned—from the caves of Mecca, from the shadows of the fig tree, from the desert, from the Sinai.

## *Psychonauts*

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I would like to once again return to the blue thread. As I said, I had once before attempted to describe it—in a brief narrative: *A Visit to Godenholm*. Here is an excerpt:

“Every now and then, Schwarzenberg burned a stick of incense to clear the air. A blue thread rose from the incense holder. Moltner contemplated it at first with amazement, and then with fascination, as if his eyes had acquired a new power. Here, the playfulness of this aromatic substance was disclosed, which rose like a slender stem and then took the shape of a delicate ring. It was as if this smoke had been created by his imagination—a pale fabric of marine lilies in the depths of the sea, which hardly move at all under the undulating waves. *Time* made its effect felt in these forms; it stretched them, concentrated them, and curled them, as if imaginary coins were being stacked one upon another. The multiplicity of space was disclosed in the fibers, in the enormous number of nerves that formed the thread and spread out in the air.

“Then a slight air current came into contact with it and made it turn gracefully on its axis, like a ballerina. Moltner uttered a cry of surprise. The spokes and lattices of the marvelous flower turned towards new prairies, towards new fields. Myriads of molecules surrendered to harmony. Here, laws no longer acted under the veil of appearances; matter was so subtle and weightless that it allowed the laws to be discerned directly. How simple and irrefutable it all was! Numbers, measures and weights arose from matter. They were stripped naked. No goddess could have communicated with the initiate in a more audacious and free manner. The pyramids, with all their weight, did not attain to this revelation. This was a Pythagorean splendor.

“Here, in the rhythm of changing shapes, a feeling became evident, which, like the shudder one feels at the edge of a cliff, strikes the researcher when he trespasses beyond the borders of his field. But it was more beautiful. And more serene.”<sup>103</sup>

This will suffice as a fragment of an initiation. Its quotation is warranted, insofar as it describes impressions that are typical of this degree of approach. Another feature that is typical is the increase of the power of the color blue. One should also pay attention to the empirical world.

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<sup>103</sup> See Ernst Jünger, *A Visit to Godenholm*, Alianza, Madrid, 1983, pp. 77-78. Jünger is quoting from the first edition of *A Visit to Godenholm* (1952), while the Spanish translation by Juan Conesa includes revisions later introduced by the author in the volume of his complete works that was published in 1978.

We certainly encounter, not only in the awakening of national consciousness, but also within internationalist revolutionary movements, a marked predilection for certain colors. The color red benefits from the fact that it has a power that lies beneath the political hierarchies, as a pure elemental color, and its appearance in the fire of conflagrations and volcanoes, but above all in blood. Against it, the white of the Bourbons, or, later, the black or brown shirts, could not triumph. In any case, this red depends on constant motion, like the circulation of the blood of the beating heart. The color red is displayed in battle, and especially in civil wars.

Blue, on the other hand, is the color of the spirit and of the higher unities attainable only through the spirit. As the color of the cosmic and planetary immensities, it also symbolizes the computerized spirit that is victorious over the passions. In its domain, there is no hatred.

These observations pertain to the attention deserved by the appearance of the color blue as a symbol. Symbols are, of course, the products of a selection, but before the selection there must be a pre-selection in the depths. Later, they will converge and, in this sense, it is agreed that blue and silver symbolize aeronautics.

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When we characterize impressions as typical, we presuppose that they are not the objects of claims by a single individual, but that they are also shared by others.

The flow of blue light heralds approach. This phenomenon is typical; it breaks down in individual perception. Just by chance, I recently received a privately-published book: *Schicksalsrune in Orakel, Traum und Trance* [*The Runes of Fate in Oracles, Dreams and Trance States*] (Arbon-Press, Arbon, 1969). It contains Rudolf Gelpke's notes concerning the experience of space flight as recounted by "astronaut Dr. Erwin Jaeckle, in Stein am Rhein" (December 2-3, 1966).

I will quote a few notes relative to our theme:

19.00: Dropped (0.2 mg LSD).

20.45: Feel "lighter".

20.55: Now the effect is beginning to be felt clearly. Intensity of blue (smoke from an incense stick, shadows in the room). "Even lighter."

21.10: Colors: Following the "approximation of blue". Acoustics unaltered (on the bells of the clock tower: "always as in a village").

21.15: "The painting on the wall takes on a third dimension."

21.20: “I could imagine that a water lily floats this way on its stem. My favorite aphorism: The greatest love is objectivity, even better in Latin: AMOR MAXIMUS AMOR REI (EST): the acronym reads: amare.”

21.25: “Now I am sober again.... desire to remain in the moment, without interruptions or evasions.... Clear blue, unusual freshness, also on my skin, how marvelously fresh.... I feel as if I am in a sauna, but it could also be water.... the shadows are becoming more distinct, yes, they are breathing.”

21.35: Outside, the noise of motors. “Yes, the motor also agrees.... Gelpke, where are you floating?”

21.50: Various colors, then they all disappear. “Presence is transparency.... The light is always good.”

22.00: “Ernst Jünger is always talking about ‘ascent’ because he lives in a cave—Only ‘flying’ seems beautiful to him.”

22.55: “... I have always known that the eye is a knot of a tree.”

Also after the gradual descent, unusual visions that, in part, are only accepted by those who are in a similar state of mind. For example: “Schelling: he conceals abysses, he knew more than he knew.” Or: “In Rome—I have seen the writing of Petrarch: he had the power of a hangover, but no weight.” Or: “My complexes are totally on the surface. Deep down I am identical with myself, that is: without vanity.”

Finally, “on the return flight”, sentences especially devoted to ecstatic intoxication: “This is not drunkenness: it cannot be compared, by any means, with alcohol—they are completely different languages. In narcosis we sink: until the water closes over us. Here, however, we ascend: the sky opens up like a flower.”

And finally: “Ascent and descent have symmetrical properties.”

## 277

If, in some passages of these extremely abbreviated notes, the reader perceives echoes of the preceding reflections, it is a sign that his reading of this book has borne fruit.

In every era, long before Delphi and Dodona, the revelations disclosed to the aspirant who beholds the vision are complemented with the interpretation of the initiate, of the person who is experienced with internal landscapes. The secret heart of nature is approached in the voice of the enraptured aspirant, but he needs an augur to discern, according to his rank and importance, the often confusing oracles.

Fashion has seized upon the psycho-pharmaceuticals just as it embraced astrology. The newspapers are full of articles about these questions. It is not by chance, but a sign that

heralds growing, unsatisfied needs. The century will not conclude without some strange phenomena supervening yet.

Everyone writes poetry, but who has written the perfect poem? This is also true of interpretations. Here, the history of discoveries has hardly even begun; places and names are missing on the white spaces of the map of the internal world.... Babel, the Bab-el-Mandeb, the Sinai. It is rare to see, as in the Apocalypse, a brilliant light.

At what point will man become identical with himself? If he manages to live up to the maxim, “know thyself”, then he will have bloomed. The mother and the father also have to become one.

The power of images is displayed in the fact that they have us in their power. However, they can exercise an even more imperious constraint: they absorb us. When we penetrate into the elements, into the characters, into the spirits, into the gods—which does not mean that we become identical to them, but to ourselves: we conjure our absent being.

## 278

When, in Section 276 above, I mentioned the name of Rudolf Gelpke,<sup>104</sup> I was reminded of the first time I met him, when I began to concern myself with the third phase, the Mexican phase, of approach. At that time he was living with his mother and his sister in a villa not far from Basle, a city where I had lived sporadically, but always with pleasure, during the 1950s.

His mother drove to Binningen to pick me up and take me to her house for dinner. Along the way, she stopped at a hotel to pick up another guest: Wilhelm Furtwängler. As we were driving across the market square, the car broke down because of a problem with the transmission. Mrs. Gelpke went to look for a mechanic, but before she departed, a line of trams had formed behind us, whose conductors were angrily blowing their horns. The maestro and I had to offer a sacrifice to Mercury as we pushed the car off the rails. Then, to relax and to watch the course of events, we went to a nearby cafeteria. As it turned out, the breakdown was a fortunate coincidence—in my experience I have often had good luck with breakdowns. We were thus able to take advantage of a peaceful interlude to talk

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<sup>104</sup> For the reader who would like to know more about the writer Erwin Jaekle, and Rudolf Gelpke, a physician and Orientalist and a pioneer, along with Jünger and Hofmann, of proto-psychedelia, we recommend the book by Albert Hofmann, *LSD—Mein Sorgenkind*, Klett-Cotta, Frankfurt, 1979, pp. 92-103. (There is a Spanish translation of this book: *LSD*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1989.) The reader may also refer to the text of the presentation that Albert Hofmann dedicated to his friend upon the occasion of his being awarded a doctorate *Honoris Causa* by the University of the Basque Country: “Droga y euforia en la obra de Ernst Jünger”, in *Simposio-Homenaje a Ernst Jünger*, ed. Enrique Ojembarrena, Bilbao, 1990, pp. 131-148. [In English, see Albert Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*, available online at: <http://www.psychedelic-library.org/child.htm>—American translator’s note.]

about something that had been addressed by Plato, and concerning which I always enjoyed listening to the opinions of intelligent contemporaries: how should the artist behave towards a despot? We would not have had time to discuss this later, since Furtwängler, who was scheduled to conduct a concert the next evening, would go to bed immediately after dinner. On the days before concerts it was his habit to go home to meditate and rest until he went onstage.

Rudolf Gelpke was just then in his first year at the university; our first meeting was brief, but augured well under a good conjunction of the stars. When, now and then, I heard from him, it was as if he had been suffused with the essence of the East. There is an elective affinity between the spirit and the substance of foreign cultures, an osmosis. Translations of Persian texts arrived, like that marvelous story of the princess in the seven star towers. Had he in the meantime obtained a position as a professor in Teheran? Did he teach classes as a visiting professor, as Mercea Eliade did at American universities? I don't know, or I have since forgotten: that world of examinations, positions, academies and honors is, *basically*, irrelevant. That is the world that is swarming with revolutionaries who are not even capable of living without a car and who parasitically batten, like remoras on a whale, on the stomach of Leviathan, upon whom they depend for good or for ill.

Then I received his apology for ecstatic intoxication—in this respect, as well, he represents the East against the West.<sup>105</sup> I opened the book to the “Introduction” (Teheran, March 1966) and I saw my memory corroborated by the following sentence: “... I have spent the last ten years, in equal proportions, in Iran (Persia) and in the West, in Europe and the United States.”

I also read the chapter dedicated to Antonio Peri and his trips.<sup>106</sup> By the way, I see the author as more akin to Antonio, prince Achmed and his niece Peri Banu than to the

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<sup>105</sup> Gelpke's classic work bears the title, *Vom Rausch im Orient und Okzident* [*On Inebriation in the East and in the West*], first published by Jünger's publisher, Klett, and later reprinted under the title, *Drogen und Seelenerweiterung*, Kindler, Munich, 1966. One of the epigraphs in this book is “Antonio Peri: a Researcher of Western-Eastern Drugs” (p. 146), and the next one reads, “Ernst Jünger and Charles Baudelaire” (p. 147).

<sup>106</sup> From Antonio Peri's library, which was looted by the island's xenophobes, two significant books were preserved: “... a heavy old volume by the Heidelberg psychologists on the extract of mescal buttons, and a paper on the phantastica of ergot by Hofmann-Bottmingen.” In one of her conversations with Captain Lucius de Geer, Antonio Peri's niece called attention to the difference between the warlike exuberance and the anxiety of her uncle: “She thought that this was indicative of not just the difference between East and West, but also a difference with respect to power. Lucius belonged to the race of world conquerors, and hence his hunger for space, his yearning for remote distances. Antonio, on the other hand, belonged to the race of the oppressed of this world and therefore he depended on more concealed pleasures, those in which the defeated take refuge. There is an equilibrium of time and space, and he who loses space

doctors, except for such spirits as Galland, Hammer-Purgstall and Rückert. The Orientalists form a particular elite that succumbed to a seduction, as did Goethe.

At the heart of Gelpke's work (*On Inebriation in the East and in the West*) we find the following passage:

"The drug researcher (the kind created by Ernst Jünger, for example, in the eastern and western figure of Antonio Peri) is a totally modern phenomenon. This figure can only arise in a society whose religious image of the world has been shattered, and where, as a result, the knowledge of the metaphysical implications and the symbolic character of ecstatic intoxication and of the vehicles to achieve it, has also been lost."

It is laudable that, shortly afterwards, the author does justice to the vine and to its condition of equality with respect to any other drug, in the hierarchy of the vehicles of ecstatic intoxication—in this domain, if he compares it to opium, there is undoubtedly a difference with respect to keys, but not with respect to the chamber that is to be entered; much more important is the difference between the western interpretation and the eastern interpretation. I quote:

For western man, "reality is the external world. Consequently, he will always feel tempted to judge every way of life, every opinion, and, in general, everything that separates him from action, as an 'escape' 'against' reality and 'from' reality. The eastern man adopts the opposite view: in his judgment, the 'road towards the interior', the mystical journey, is the only experience of reality that goes beyond time and space and therefore beyond the veil of fleeting appearance. This is why, from his point of view, the person who 'escapes' is actually the person who lives in thrall to the external world: the man of action".

Speaking of wine in the light of the East, we cannot fail to mention Omar Khayyam, the tent-maker, or Hâfez. Concerning the latter, Gelpke says: "Naturally, wine, for a wise man of the rank of a Hâfez, has *both* meanings (that is, symbolic and real), and this is confirmed by the following verses:

"You fill my cup, waiter, with the purple light of pleasure.  
You sing a song, oh minstrel, because the sun revolves in rhythm with our desires.  
A divine visage reflects from the bottom of the chalice:  
a madman, whose anxieties will never be quelled by the wine of *our* cup;  
I am afraid that the break of dawn, the day of the resurrection,  
will accuse, as a sin, not my bacchanals, but your abstinence.  
A living heart, beating with love, can never perish,  
and in the Book of the World we are fated to inherit eternity...."

(From the verse translation by Georg Jacob in *Unio Mystica*, Hannover, 1922.)

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attempts to compensate for his loss by gaining time. This is what Antonio was seeking in the labyrinths of ecstasy." Ernst Jünger, *Heliopolis*, Seix Barral, Barcelona, 1987, p. 335.

If I do not like the term, *Drogenforscher* (“drug researcher”), it is not so much an aversion to the word itself as to the use to which it has been put. An Indo-Germanic root, *prk*, has been split up in the Romance and Germanic languages to form verbs that sometimes contain an interrogative intention and sometimes an investigative intention (*argentums poscere*: “to demand money”). Research is not free of suspicion.

The struggle in Faust’s studio occurs around the extensive or intensive sense of the word. It involves the dilemma between science and knowledge:

That we in truth can nothing know!  
That in my heart like fire doth burn.<sup>107</sup>

Since then, research has become increasingly more dependent on technology, on statistics, on pure mathematics, on nuts and bolts, on microscopes and telescopes. The researcher is no longer stalking the real tiger, or grouse, or even a strange nocturnal butterfly; he is a cipher in a planned hunt. Disgusting types populate the margins of science, like the impotent and shameless old man who measures orgasms with a stopwatch. The heartbeat has been replaced by the ticking of the clock. It is nothing to marvel at when Gaia sheds her leaves. However, after the bleaching of the winter, even more than spring will be engendered.

We live in an epoch in which words have lost their gravity, which tends to take place periodically. Then they should be recharged again or replaced. Even the term, *forschen* (“to research”), becomes suspect. Intelligent westerners foresaw this, as in the case of Flaubert, who shared with certain other persons an inclination for the East (*Bouvard et Pécuchet*, 1881). At that time, with regard to spiritual matters, it was still possible to take some liberties.

Gelpke therefore refers to the venerable root of the word. The lover asks a question in a way that is different than someone who is just curious. The light and shadow of the Cosmic Hunt still affect him. And the great huntress still approaches him, like the goddess of the Moon, while Actaeon, because of his sacrilegious curiosity, is torn to pieces *by his own dogs*.

It is said that Actaeon “preserved no trace of humanity, except that most fateful trait in a situation involving amorous relations: a conscience”. The most marvelous thing about this great myth is how Chiron, preceptor of Actaeon, called off the dogs. He showed them a picture of Actaeon, which made them sit calmly at its side.

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<sup>107</sup> Goethe, *Faust* (Part One).



This power touches upon the job of the artist, of the man who is a friend of the Muses, of the wise man, in eras when the dogs have lost their master. The work of art not only acts prophetically on the future, but interprets, expiates and pacifies the past as well.

### ***Retrospective on Godenholm***

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I owe the spectacle of the blue thread to a morning in Bottmingen; it is interwoven with another event, with my visit to the Celt, Heuneberg, on a winter night. It was an encounter, one night, with fate; it was only insinuated, and for good reasons.

I knew in advance that my little book (*A Visit to Godenholm*) would neither make much of an impression nor would it be a commercial success; and I was struck by a kind of chill when I saw it in the shop windows.

For Baader, the task of art was still transparency. In a consumer society, other principles prevail. This is of the nature of the thing, and anyone in this society who gives himself aristocratic airs of discontent, will make himself ridiculous. It is precisely at this point where meditation generates a particular kind of attraction. Even our contemporaries endowed with intelligence do not know what to make of *A Visit to Godenholm*, as I was able to gather from their more or less perplexed observations. It was, besides, very hard to classify.

When, after the First World War, I was appointed to the commission that drafted the new military regulations, I began to read contemporary literature. This was preceded, in military hospitals and during periods of convalescence, by an avalanche of readings that were by no means fruitless, focused particularly on the classics and the romantics. With respect to the moderns, the ones to whom I then turned, I am indebted to Friedrich Georg for a good selection; he had been seriously wounded and discharged from the army a year before. He called my attention to the expressionists, especially Trakl, to whom I have remained totally faithful.<sup>108</sup>

At that time, in Berlin, I also obtained a copy of a collection of short stories by Gottfried Benn, *Brains*—reading this book made me want to read his subsequent works. For every passionate reader there are a few authors “one reads with a feeling of participating in their work” and whose “new books” are awaited with impatience. This is a spacious playing field for hopes, delights and disappointments.

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<sup>108</sup> Friedrich, more inclined to poetry, devoted an early essay to Trakl in a collection of essays, edited by Ernst, in memory of those who had fallen in the First World War; and he added a second essay on the same topic to his later collection of essays, *East and West*. It should also be kept in mind that while Jünger buried himself in his “avalanche of readings”, Trakl, a pharmacist by profession, committed suicide in a military hospital by taking an overdose of cocaine.

I had a feeling that in his poems “there had to be something to discover”, particularly in the verses that approached the undifferentiated and touched upon the stratum that covers it, and over which a precipitation begins to fall, although vaguely, like dew and fog. The indeterminate is still strong here. It is the object of poetic invocation, as, for example, in the following stanzas:

O that we might be our ancestors’ ancestors.  
A clump of slime in a warm bog.  
Life and death, fertilizing and parturition  
Would all be functions of our silent juices.

An algal leaf or a sand dune,  
Shaped by the wind and basal and heavyset.  
Even a dragonfly’s head or a gull’s wing  
Would be too evolved and suffer too much.<sup>109</sup>

It is a ticket for a voyage to the Isle of Orplid.<sup>110</sup> A beautiful equilibrium between the conscious and the unconscious vibrates in these verses, and also between certainty and pain. It is thus like a ship with a good draught navigated through frontier rivers.

The poem—entitled “Songs”—trails off in the subsequent verses. However, what counts in the work are the luminous points. The desert extends far into the distance; time becomes a torture—the affliction that already impregnated romanticism, that “I don’t know what I want to say”, becomes a modern, orchestrated sadness. I have before me his *Works* (1960); I want to look up a word in the index, and there I find, one after another, like the labels of a spice rack:

*Träume*  
*Traum*  
*Tripper*  
*Tristesse*  
*Trupp hegelaufener Söhne*  
*Turin I*<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Readers of Spanish who are interested in Gottfried Benn’s poetry may consult the anthology edited by José Manuel López de Abiada, *Gottfried Benn*, Júcar, Madrid, 1983, and also *Poemas estáticos*, tr. Antonio Bueno Tubía, Libertarias, Madrid, 1993; Pre-textos is also preparing to publish a Spanish translation of *Aprèslude*. [For the English-speaking reader who is interested in Benn’s poetry, there are several English language editions of some of his works, including: Gottfried Benn, *Primal Vision: Selected Prose & Poetry*, New Directions, 1971; *Prose, Essays, Poems*, “The German Library” Series No. 73, Continuum International Publishing Group, 1987; and *Selected Poems and Prose*, Carcanet Press, 2013 (American translator’s note).]

<sup>110</sup> A name coined by Mörike to refer to the Isle of Dreams.

<sup>111</sup> “Dreams/Dream/Gonorrhea/*Tristesse*/Troop of Spoiled Sons/*Turin I*.”

From this list one can get an idea of what he is cooking. The poems, certainly both “Tristesse” as well as “Turin I”, are, once again, very beautiful.

He achieved success with exhibitions like “Gonorrhea” and “Morgue”. In any case, one must distinguish between applause and worth. The worth or the measure in which the author is taken seriously is creation of approach. What is striking about this, what is illuminating—esthetically, politically or even just by virtue of its sensationalism—is not the house with its walls, basement or attic, but the furniture: the bar with its whores, the cacophony of Berlin. All of this is nothing but a backdrop; applause is not a sufficient criterion to determine whether the piece will survive once the season is over or whether it will still be performed three hundred years from now.

One does less justice to an author by abandoning him than by recognizing his *karma* and his tragedy, which is always strictly connected with the time and its deadly aggression. In the best cases the author puts up a good fight but his successes are turned against him. Time leaves its mark on works and images, even when it takes the form of scars.

## 281

During the years “before the Wall” I regularly traveled by airplane to Berlin to visit my brothers who lived the eastern zone; we stayed in a small hotel, in the vicinity of the Anhalt Station. Then I also met Ernst Niekisch<sup>112</sup> and other friends.

I can still vividly recall an afternoon at the house of Gottfried Benn, with whom I maintained an epistolary relation for some time. I would have preferred to see him on the Mediterranean coast, where it is possible to breathe as if you were just released from prison, and where he also liked to stay. However, he wrote me, I think I was in Montecatini at the time, the following note: “I would have gladly accompanied you on your trip to the South, but I must observe so many dietetic rules (duodenal ulcer), and I would have to bring so many medicines (rheumatism), and I would have to pack so many jars of ointment in my suitcase (eczema), that I lost my desire to go. Until I was in my seventies I could make my body do whatever I felt like doing; it obeyed and did everything I wanted. Suddenly, the great tendency to decline, and annoying words like ‘allergic’ and ‘neuro-vegetative’, were no longer of any use to me, they ceased to help me.”

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<sup>112</sup> Ernst Niekisch (1889-1967), the most important representative of “National-Bolshevism”, the left wing of the so-called “conservative revolution”, and the author of works such as *Hitler Ein deutsches Verhängnis* [Hitler, a German Fate] (1932) and *The Third Reich Figure* (1935). His opposition earned him many years in concentration camps beginning in 1937, where he remained until the end of the war. Jünger’s appreciation for this unique personality has left its mark in various passages of *Radiations I* in which, at times, he is mentioned under the code name of Cellaris (prisoner). See *op. cit.*, pp. 479-482 and 511; and see also, *Pasados los setenta I*, Tusquets, p. 13.

A dermatologist who was obliged to pack jars of ointment when he went on vacation: this did not look good. Unfortunately, it did not take long for one of those letters marked in black to arrive, which were showing up in my mailbox more and more frequently and piling up in my house.

Gottfried Benn is one of the many sons of Protestant pastors through whom the evangelical church has enriched literature. Things would have “gone better” for him in Paris or in Rome than in Berlin, but it is not possible for us to choose our native country.

At the time, when I was visiting him on the Bozener Strasse, he had recovered somewhat and seemed to feel better. His apartment, located on the ground floor, seemed to hearken back to the Wilhelmine epoch and had, along with its tenants, survived the firestorms of the Second World War. Benn owed his survival, not least of all, to the army. He had served as a doctor in both wars. The uniform was almost better camouflage in the civil war than on the front. Benn was able to make use of it, since the resentful persecutors had specialized in targeting him, and certainly did so with a zeal that displeased Himmler himself. In the absurd correspondence that was initiated, and which has in part been brought to light by the indefatigable Joseph Wulf, the question was once asked whether the name, “Benn”, did not conceal a Semitic surname.

The hallway of his “Berlin apartment” did not have any windows. His greeting in the shadows was a pleasant one. European courtesy, almost transformed into a second nature, as in the Far East. Sign of the Zodiac: Taurus. I was unable to recognize the special features of this sign in his face and, at first sight, I would have instead thought the sign was more suited to his wife. She was at his side, I saw, in the shadows, her face full and placid and her hair thick and brown, with streaks of grey. She was a woman of few words, but her presence seemed to add a new dimension to the conversation. Although they are not common, such interlocutors do exist, and to say that they know the art of listening would fall far short of the truth. Their silence is rather propitious for language, it gives it body, it becomes a resonance box. Then she went to the kitchen, and I could take a look around the apartment.

It must have been a cloudy day—the medical office seemed somewhat dreary. But there were probably some bright lamps, since dermatological consultations require a scrupulous inspection. A couch upholstered with dark leather or a waxy fabric, as is used for medical examinations, was covered with newspapers, which were also scattered around on the floor, as well; it appeared that his reading time had been prolonged until after noon. Next to the couch, a stand held a glass cylinder, from which was suspended a rubber tube. An apparatus for transfusions—an instrument, as Benn said, transformed into a museum piece.

As it turned out, he did not have a lot of patients—or did he say that he had almost none?—which did not seem to bother him. Perhaps people only disturbed his meditations. Between consultations he wrote letters or drafts of poems on his prescription pad.

He mentioned the newspapers: “It seems that we once again share a vile enemy. Bah! They can even write that I sodomize flies. I am totally indifferent.”

Then I was able to cast another glance at his wife’s office—the difference was like night and day. I got the impression that here a delicate order reigned: little metal, dark wood, perhaps ebony, with mother-of-pearl inlay; it looked like patient and precise work. To have a tooth pulled here would have to be almost a pleasure.

When the door opened and then closed, I experienced a kind of *déjà vu*. Then, from the depths of my memory, appeared the little *atelier* of Marie Laurencin. There, too, the work was almost completely dissolved in a sensation of wellbeing—at that time in green and red, as now in silver and dark brown. Even better than obtaining income without working is working without fatigue, work as a game.

Then we sat down to eat, and we did honor to the viands. Lobsters with mayonnaise, old burgundy—back then he must not have had any problems with his duodenum. It is a relief to find oneself in the lodge of thought with a spirit who knows how to break through individual, institutional and regional frontiers and who also had a little bit of an Aristophenian sense of humor.

A little shrimp on the Titanic; there was commotion in the corridors. The water was spilling everywhere, dragging along with it newspapers, straw, all kinds of personal belongings, and even corpses. The rats began to squeak at the door. The waiters had disappeared, but there were still provisions in the pantry—imported cigarettes, Hennessy. This picture is part of the style of the century; I have become accustomed to it since the First World War. On such occasions, we are struck by distinct impressions, good observations are made. Physical safety is scarce, while the presence of the spirit grows. It is indigestible matter for Leviathan; he will vomit it up.

*The Ptolemaic and the Mauretanian*: a text in which we are measured by that same yardstick;<sup>113</sup> Benn added some observations. The Mediterranean; the towers of Antibes: “a fanatic cause”; I had sent him a photograph from there. History: “The reptile does not move away so silently.” I discovered something that I had not previously known: his presence, as a doctor, at the shooting of Edith Cavell (October 12, 1915).<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> A now-classic essay by Max Bense in which the similarities, but also the differences, between the “pure” prose of Benn and the “symbolic” prose of Jünger are examined. See Max Bense, *Ptolomäer und Mauretanier oder Die theologische Emigration der deutschen Literatur*, Haffman Verlag, Zurich, 1984.

<sup>114</sup> An English nurse who was accused of espionage and shot, in the autumn of 1915, by the Prussian army, under the medical supervision of Benn. Thirteen years later, the expressionist poet dedicated an article to her, entitled, “Wie Miss Cavell erschossen wurde” (1928) [How Miss Cavell was Shot], which describes the events in question objectively and in minute detail, in response to a film that exalted the figure of this “heroine”. Jünger’s interest is understandable if we recall the cold description of the shooting of the German deserter that appears in *Radiations*.

“On Soldiers’ Suicides and Their Causes”: this was the name of the special unit that he commanded during the Second World War; this information was also new, but very illuminating, to me, and his affinity with suicide was self-evident.

Then we talked about our travels, once again about the Mediterranean. His wife: “If you are going to exchange anecdotes about the friends you made on your trips, I am going to step out for a little while”—it was obviously her signal to make her exit and disappear into the kitchen. Benn went to his library to look for his report on the tragic end of Miss Cavell; he brought *A Visit to Godenholm* back with him, which had recently been published.

He sat down again at my side: “Do you know? This is the most refined book you have ever written.” Then he began to leaf through the small volume and began to read a passage about the goal to which we must make our approach, but which is not possible to attain. For an instant, the phenomenon is identified with being, the wave with the sea.

“The instant eternally returns in which the One is raised over the parts and is cloaked in brilliant light. This mystery was ineffable, but, nonetheless, all mysteries refer to it and are about it, only about it. The courses of history and their ramifications, which seem to be so interwoven, lead to this truth. All of human life, every day, with each step, also approaches this goal. The theme of all the arts was nothing but this One, from this height every thought was judged according to its rank. Here was the victory that crowned every being and removed from each the thorn of his defeats. The grain of dust, the worm, the murderer, all participate in it. This light knows neither death nor darkness.”

He put the book down between us on the couch and blurted out: “What the devil is it? What can it be? It is the penis! It can only be the penis!”

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It must have been a monologue, because just at that moment Ilse Benn arrived with the coffee—or it could have been cognac or a foaming glass of wine. In any event, we spent another hour together, during which harmony reigned. Then I returned to the hotel and meditated on our encounter.

Something in me had been affected more deeply than by the conversation about books, men and events, even more than the splendor and misery of the poet, who throws a piece of himself to the hounds, whose howling is mixed with the triumphant blaring of the horns of the hunters. This fate follows the author and his work in the twilight, a faint streak of light, the tail of the comet.

Presence offers more than communication and reflection—unity in the timeless, not just in time. The eyelids of the poet open over wide open eyes, with the soft power of the wings of the dove or the owl. This was the look of the dreamer, susceptible to the display of vehement passions and the awakening of affects, and also capable of suffering. The capacity for suffering is necessary. Suffering overlays the word. Silence is hidden behind

the word. If I remember correctly, Benn once compared words to the cells of eyelashes, which approach being by touch.<sup>115</sup> But it is first necessary to approach the word, groping for it in the dark by sense of touch. Every word acquires solidity only when it is touched again, when it is rediscovered. A small reserve of words is enough for the poet, moderation is in fact advantageous for him. Overabundance can sweep us away both in the cup as well as in the sea.

Two verses will be enough to remain faithful to a poet. I brought his poems with me and I once again read the stanzas that had inspired me in my youth:

O that we might be our ancestors' ancestors.  
A clump of slime in a warm swamp.

A testimony to how much our suffering has increased since Rousseau. In his daydreams one catches a glimpse of distant, but ultimately human, archipelagos. The classics do not love dissolution; their "chief happiness" is of another kind.<sup>116</sup> Benn's glance has penetrated deeper into decomposition than Baudelaire's; that, too, is a passage that must be traversed.

When I was in the deserted lobby of the hotel, and I recited these two verses out loud, I discovered with surprise that up to that moment I had been reading them incorrectly. It seemed that until then the blind spot of my eye had rested on the word *Moor* ("swamp"). I had taken it for *Meer* ("sea") and I had sought the rhyme in *schon zu sehr* ("too much").

A clump of slime in a warm sea.

Now the error had been corrected; but I only reluctantly abandoned it.

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I conclude these reminiscences of Berlin while the snow falls outside and the birds are perched in the linden trees of Stauffenberg before they take flight again; at this very moment, a finch and his mate are pecking at the sunflower seeds right next to me on the windowsill.

Today is February 11, 1970; it is Ash Wednesday—this evening we will go, as we do every year on this date, to dine on snails at The Eagle tavern in Altheim. Yesterday, in the

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<sup>115</sup> Specifically, both in *Epilogue and the Poetic Ego* (1927) [see Gottfried Benn, *Doble vida y otros ensayos autobiográficos*, Barral, Barcelona, 1972, pp. 7-13] as well as in "Problems of Poetry" (1951); the latter included in our edition of *The Modern Ego*, Pretextos, Valencia, 2000, pp. 190 *et seq.*

<sup>116</sup> A reference to Goethe's famous verses in the "Book of Suleika" from *West-Eastern Divan*: "The slave, the lord of victories, / The crowd, whene'er you ask, confess / In sense of personal being lies / A child of earth's chief happiness."

Riedlingen Square, they “burned the witch”. In this corner of Upper Swabia many archaic practices are preserved almost in their pure state.

The manuscript is approaching its end. I have spent much more time on it than I had originally intended. Before I once again take up the thread of my theme, I was reading my mail, as I do every morning. Usually, this is an appetizer that will last the whole day; I mention it in this context due to a commentary on Godenholm contained in one of the letters. Perhaps it was suggested by that same passage that had also intrigued Benn, although in a different way. Vintila Horia wrote to me from Madrid (February 7, 1970):

“Dominique de Roux m’a fait avoir *Visite à Godenholm*. Je l’ai déjà lu trois fois et à chaque lecture j’y trouve des nouvelles beautés. Le titre lui-même veut dire peut-être la maison des Dieux ou le toit des Dieux, si je ne me trompe, et il s’agit là de la dernière initiation, celle de la mort, esquissée ou pressentie de la première page....”<sup>117</sup>

By chance this letter arrived precisely today, *ad hoc*, but other similar signs confirm that interest in this book is beginning to grow. André Almuro, who, following the example of the French romantics, leaves his Parisian home in the winter for a house in the countryside of the Black Forest, asked me about it now and then for details for his opera, *A Visit to Godenholm*.

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A book has to reach the heart. Then it finds its goal, beyond countries and seas. This fact was corroborated some years ago by a visit from Guido, a young Dutchman who reminded me of that oriental discussed by De Quincey. For De Quincey, the reason for the meeting was the aroma of opium—this time, it was of a Mexican variety.

De Quincey’s oriental was a disquieting personality; he became a frequent guest in De Quincey’s nightmares.<sup>118</sup> Guido would also appear in the theater of dreams, but always as a friendly guest. The capacity for metamorphosis in oneiric personalities is not given to just anybody; it is determined by one’s participation in the psychic cosmos—regardless of the nature of that participation.

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<sup>117</sup> “Dominique de Roux sent me a copy of *A Visit to Godenholm*. I have read it three times and each time I read it I find new beauty. The very title perhaps seems to say, if I am not mistaken, the house of the Gods or the roof of the Gods, and, in effect, is about the last initiation, that of death, suggested or sensed from the very first page....”

<sup>118</sup> An anecdote narrated by De Quincey in his *Confessions*, where he recounts, with a great deal of humor and compassion, how a Malayan, on a trip through England for some reason, sought hospitality in his house despite the indignation of his old landlady and her ignorant servant. The multilingual Englishman, moved to pity by the strange visitor, offered him a large quantity of opium for his return trip: “I must have done him the service I designed by giving him one night of respite from the pains of wandering.” Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, “Introduction to the Pains of Opium”.



Books have their fates—I saw this now and then, for what caused Guido, from his hut on an island in the Gulf of Mexico, to come to Godenholm to seek me out? What could the reading of a hermetic text written in a foreign language have meant to him? In any case, he had instinctively grasped that an experience that was familiar to him had been described in the book.

Someone must have mailed him the book or brought it to him—perhaps Wolfgang Cordan, who traveled a great deal in Mexico, and who died young. Or maybe he received it through his connections with the circle of Wolfgang Frommel, another one of those key figures, concerning whom little is said, but who are so well known.

In the Second World War, a circle of people was formed in Amsterdam that is hard to define—musical, political, philosophical, Socratic, Georgian, one of the ganglionic nodes to which Frommel refers as his “imperial palace”. One anecdote after another concerning this house on the canal seeped through to Paris—things that I would have preferred not to know in such detail; I heard talk of Trott and also of Erhard Göpel, when he returned from one of his visits to Beckmann. Guido was sixteen years old at the time; he worked for them as a bicycle messenger and can consider himself lucky not to have been liquidated.

He arrived here, too, on a bicycle, with which he crossed all of Europe, when he was not walking or hitchhiking. Once he even drove a broken down old car that he somehow got across the border without any license or registration.

“Guido, do you at least have insurance?”

“Yes, in the vertical position.”

There is something about Guido’s personality that attracts the attention of the police, but when they have exchanged a few words with him they send him on his way. He is a quiet, affable guest. When I entered his room in the morning, the bed was untouched. He slept on the floor, in his sleeping bag, which he also used in the forest and even on days when it rained. He spent the morning in the garden; he liked to spend time in the arbor, with only the *I Ching* and his yarrow stalks, which he cast and arranged next to the book.

I know many people for whom *The Book of Changes* harbors a great significance; it is linked, for most of them, as is the case with Ernst Wilhelm Eschmann, with their passion for the Far East. In Guido’s case this connection reached the deepest layer of his being. When it reaches this bottom layer, the spirit becomes capable of performing the task of the augur and, then, regardless of which oracle is interrogated, it will answer. He is transformed into a key, one among others, more or less subtly cut. Matter becomes a fatherland without borders. Then it is possible, as in ecstatic intoxication, to throw away the key.

Now and then, my correspondence includes a letter from Guido—from Holland, Germany, the United States, Mexico. I have received long telephone calls from California, which annoyed me because they were very expensive. Guido was working in California as a carpenter—that one phone call might cost him a week’s pay. For a while he wrote to me from France, where he was taking care of children at a farm; he was good with children.

“Right now, I am taking care of a three year old German-American child; he came here with a severe case of television intoxication. After a few days, he has already been cured of his mad desire to throw stones at everything alive; at this very moment the patient is lying tranquilly on the grass, contemplating the flowers.”

Despite the fact that he did not write them in his native language, the letters I receive from him are of an aphoristic pregnancy. “For the New Year I have of course written you a letter, but, as so often happens with most of my scribbling it has disappeared into the wastepaper basket. Therefore, today I shall start again from scratch. In Wilflingen, last summer, you said: ‘Europe is historically dead’. The history of the world is the birth pains of the feminine principle. Until then humanity is still walking on all fours. Wolfskehl: ‘Blood is semen, the spirit is venom’. The murder of the *flowers-children* in New York seems to me to be a bad omen. ‘Psychedelic’ sounds like a pharmaceutical product. We owe this word to the Pope of the American religion, Alice-D. It seems that they have taken giant leaps there in the last few years. I was never an adept, but I have been seized by the mania for reading. From Tepoztlan I received news that you are considering a trip to Mexico. In *The Perfection of Technology*,<sup>119</sup> which I unfortunately only possess in English translation, I found the sentence: ‘Life is reduced to a choice between evils.’<sup>120</sup> The old negro, black as coal—he was, in fact, a coal stoker—whom I met in the bush in Haiti, asked me the fundamental question of our time: ‘Wat je fooh?’ He had to repeat it about half a dozen times, until I understood his *pidgin English*. In Germany they gave us a truck (LKW) with a new kind of engine: a vehicle of love (Liebes-Kraft-Wagen).”<sup>121</sup>

And it went on like that, page after page. The text flows in associations. This is how we talk when we have had a little too much to drink. Guido also had a good hand for wood, he made tables and carved sandals, which are so highly appreciated by snobs. Since his business has prospered, he no longer derives any pleasure from it. I think that he was living in an orphanage before he joined the secret organization in Amsterdam. To avoid coming to grief in such places, one must have a “good stomach”, as they say in Swabia.

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<sup>119</sup> Friedrich Georg Jünger, *The Failure of Technology: Perfection without Purpose*, trans. F. D. Wieck (Hinsdale, Ill.: Henry Regnery Co. 1949) [American translator’s note].

<sup>120</sup> A critical essay written by Friedrich Georg Jünger in the 1930s, *Perfección y fracaso de la técnica*, Sur, Buenos Aires, 1968, which may be read as the “companion volume” to *The Worker*.

<sup>121</sup> Guido is engaging in a play on words with the German acronym used to refer to a truck (LKW: *Lastkraftwagen*), changing the L for *Last* (“cargo, weight”) to *Liebe* (“love”).

It is quite possible that this way of living will spread. Society is becoming increasingly more orphaned, not only due to the loss of the father, but also of progenitors. The State, the “dragon with a thousand scales”, is transformed into a gigantic pedagogue and schools sprout up from the asphalt that are increasingly less and less distinguishable from factories. Exploitation spreads and intensifies; as was the case in the past with muscular force, today brainpower is monopolized.

Does this therefore mean that evolution is reaching its conclusion and that the process will end in a fixed order? Nietzsche answered this question in the negative; Huxley and Orwell gave an affirmative, although pessimistic, response. Huxley’s views towards the end of his life once again surpassed the splendor and misery of the last man—beyond the ideal of the “too many”, as Nietzsche called them.

Nonetheless, not only will the Babylonian construction of pedagogical automatism and automatic pedagogy increase, but so too will the voiceless dissatisfaction of those affected by these trends. You cannot open up a newspaper without coming across its signs.

The spectacle is not the exclusive property of our era, for, since times long past, the spirit of the time has extolled the excellences of its specialties in the booths of the fairgrounds—either in the form of prestidigitators, or hucksters, or dentists. When someone has paid two or three times what the price of admission is worth and then once he is inside they demand not only his skin and his hair, but even his head, the stupefied believer is transformed into a shameless believer who, now, is brought up before the tribunals. The scene becomes more despicable. Finally:

“In smoke and mould the fleshless dead  
And bones of beasts surround me yet!”<sup>122</sup>

When the desert grows, it is covered with bones, skeletons and rib cages; this, too, is a spectacle that is returning. The Lesser Transitions are no longer favorable omens. To study these processes, one must resort, if not to myth, then perhaps to paleontology.

To me, therefore, *Godenholm* is more than just a monologue. It has earned me the recognition of some marginal vagabonds, of unprogrammed types.

“Orphanages”: that is one of those euphemisms that arise wherever the roots of one’s native home have been lost. Everyone knows that a high percentage of criminals, prostitutes and psychopaths of every variety emerge from them. They are the shadows of

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<sup>122</sup> From Goethe, *Faust* I.

a yearning that cannot be pacified. No matter how lifelike it may be, the wooden simulacrum of the mother goose never makes up for the lack of affection needed by the chicks.

Besides the *I Ching*, Guido always brought with him some medicinals for his comfort—a handful of peyote buttons, marijuana, and other similar substances. Once he also brought from La Maurie—as he called his infants’ farm—a flowerpot with pale sprouts of cannabis. He did not know that in our climate they would fail to thrive.

We conversed about this subject only from a theoretical point of view, above all because it seemed to me that his nature had been affected by his “trips”—not so much by their frequency as by their intensity. The best drugs that we use now do not lead to addiction. Of course, one can be sick for one’s entire life, but one can only die once. That is why we find that states of profound ecstatic intoxication are also subject to taboos in their countries of origin. They are either reserved for the shaman or else they are limited to initiations or festivals. Three approaches suffice for them: the initiation to adolescence, the period before marriage, and the deathbed. It is said that Huxley, shortly before leaving this world, even took mescaline. Better than opiates, anyway.

“Dying is not very easy”; these were the last words of my *Onkel*. This is true—and that is why we should learn how to do it. This is more important than all machine technologies, including the voyages to the Moon. This has always been known, ever since Eleusis, in the epoch of the Lombards, the Chatti, the Aryans, the Vikings. This is the meaning of the tests of courage that precede admission to the male secret societies. The youth is introduced to the host of the spirits and the dead, and returns transfigured.

For details, read the book by Van Gennep, *Rites de passage*, Mircea Eliade, Schurtz, and, “in small quantities”, everywhere.

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Wherever the stakes are that high, there is no risk of addiction, and abuse would be comparable to what was in the past criminalized as sacrilegious profanation. I already said that “Mexico” must not be conceived in the geographical sense. It is distributed, in small pieces, everywhere, even if its own soil is extremely fertile. In our classification, the coca leaf does not belong to that geographical zone, despite the fact that it grows there; but the European ergot of rye, with “Hofmann’s elixir”, does belong there.

Hashish, concerning which a campaign against its inclusion on the list of so-called “narcotics” is currently underway, must be classified in the “intermediate degree”, in the East, and age-old experience teaches that it can very well lead to a destructive addiction, just like the euphoric derivatives of opium. It can also unleash aggression, and a whole series of crimes—as are retailed today in the news—are undoubtedly related to the effects of this drug.

This is not the place to compare costs and benefits, we must stick to our topic: approach. Once we have entered its domain, we leave diversity behind as a vain appearance. Phytochemistry is capable of designing a palace with a thousand glass rooms, which pharmacologists and pharmaco-gnostics help to furnish as if they were interior designers. They can furnish them with paintings and comfortable furniture, with baths and balconies. The scale of *The World as Will and Representation*, the variety of energetic and fantastic possibilities will be selected and classified; they can be separated, ordered and named as if on a keyboard with numerous keys. Here, there is still unexplored territory.

But, so what? Palaces of this kind are reconnoitered as if they were deserts; these states are not unknown to us. As long as we have not yet opened the door to the last chamber, we will not reign as masters of the house. Now it is necessary for the master to arrive, the guru, and that will be the end of comfort and science.

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After his political phase, Guido bummed around, alone, from one country to another. There are “fetters” concealed in the act of “joining”. “To make something work in the opposite sense” means: to hold the cord of the function from the other end. This is how force is squandered. When you just let go, you give ground to the enemy. “To oppose resistance” means to employ force in a direction that is determined by the enemy. We are rapidly unmasked. The closer we get to the East, the more we understand this.

Saint Anthony, who transfigured the desert into a forest, had meditated on this question. He did not rush to martyrdom. But he did remain visible when the condemned men passed by him. Then he marched to the feast that he had himself prepared. Here we are even princes. “Few are worthy of being contradicted.” However, anyone who is clever enough, does not have to avoid the marketplace. Zarathustra strolled right through the middle of the market square.

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Guido had smoked with the natives in Haiti, he knew the *flower-children* in California, the *provos* of Amsterdam, the multicolored *hippies* who lounge about on the steps of the Plaza de España and around the Barcaccia, the undefinables who are popping up everywhere and who speak in their own slang. Explorers of the deepest depths have joined these communes; it is also a good thing that their members are educated people.

More important than the regional and horizontal differences are the vertical differences of the psychonautical trip, that is, the soundings of the depths. For Guido, it was also a question of rhythm; the great trip began when one could say: “I am high”. Then came the so-called “alchemical nuptials” or the orgasm of the spirit: “I am stoned”. These expressions are now in fashion; he had yet a third one, which he owed to Wolfskehl and which he begged me to keep secret. “I still have not found anyone who has come so far.”

But the *down-kick* [in English in the original—American translator’s note], the Last Judgment, always loomed threateningly.

## *A mushroom symposium*

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The *down-kick* also loomed over our symposium on mushrooms in the spring of 1962, but it passed, without being completely revealed, like a vague uneasiness.

This symposium was dedicated to one of the Mexican prophetic mushrooms, the *champignons hallucinogènes divinatoires*, which were already well known for many years in Europe, although in fact only from a theoretical or esoteric point of view. Already, in the exhaustive *Codex* of Bernardino de Sahagún one finds an illustration depicting the species: a group of mushrooms, over which a bird-man with a pointed beak hovers. Immediately after the conquest, the first trials were conducted against persons who had used mushrooms in the sacrament of Holy Communion. They were condemned as *chose diabolique* [practitioners of devilry—American translator’s note].

Science only began to become interested in these mushrooms after Wasson’s expedition, when, with a group of ethnologists, chemists and photographers, he visited the most remote villages in the mountains of Mexico. They even participated in indigenous rites. Their first report appeared in the spring of 1957 in *Life*. This article was followed in 1958 by the impressive monograph, profusely illustrated, by Heim and Wasson, *Les champignons hallucinogènes du Mexique*. Their work meets the highest demands of the human and natural sciences, both by virtue of its high intellectual level and its abundant details. In this text, disciplines as diverse as ethnology, archeology, mythology, history, comparative linguistics, mycology, pharmacodynamics and phytochemistry are united. In addition, it quotes prophets like William Blake: “He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing mortal eye can see does not imagine at all.”

For Wasson, visions “are stored in our depths”. The mushroom calls them forth. Certainly, he praises it, pointing out that it is not addictive; he says he has never heard of any Indian who knew of anyone who had a “*penchant aux champignons*”. Wasson probably came to those inaccessible valleys shortly before the gates of the city were closed, with the first helicopter.

It was inevitable that, shortly thereafter, the mushroom would be examined under the microscope at the Sandoz facility, in Basle. Albert Hofmann employed phytochemical procedures and Heribert Konzett employed pharmacological procedures; the latter had already, however, moved to Innsbruck at the time. In any case, over the course of our correspondence we conceived of the idea of a symposium, to which we also invited Rudolf Gelpke.

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It was soon time to make preparations that would have to exclude, at the very least, the most crude elements of the laymen from the symposium. A certain seriousness in the gathering place could not be harmful—to the contrary: the details would only confuse the uninitiated. Yazdi, a Persian author who was translated and often quoted by Gelpke, offers precise instructions in his treatise on the art of smoking opium. One should avoid using the opium pipe in places exposed to the wind, or dirty or dark places, nor should one smoke in the company of a person who disapproves of smoking opium, or in the presence of a stranger or a non-smoker. He likewise prohibits smoking alone, since it is then to be feared that demons would appear. The ideal is a small and select circle of friends. Today it would be necessary to add that one should choose a place where, if possible, one will not hear the noise of motors. And this is becoming increasingly more difficult.

There was a couch and a comfortable armchair there; I brought blankets and pillows, and even exotic but comfortable clothing, including a *hijab* that I had recently brought back from Egypt. The evening was heated with a large ceramic stove. It consumes enormous quantities of wood, so abundant in the forests of Stauffenberg. On the other hand, it stored and radiated heat for a long time, so that it was not necessary to constantly feed the fire. It is located in the apartment on the ground floor, where the Gestapo stored documents seized after the attempt on Hitler's life. The Gestapo's seal was still there, above the door.

I had recently married. Taurita<sup>123</sup> paid for her admission to the house; with the arrival of the guests, the ground floor would have to become taboo. Upstairs, she had to prepare a "midnight dinner", select the music, keep an eye on the cat and prevent it from escaping to the ground floor, disconnect the telephone and the household appliances and, in general, to do everything she could to prevent anything from disturbing our get-together.

This, as I have said, has become increasingly more difficult. The monotonous drone of motors is the mortal enemy of all higher perception. Here, the will speaks out against representation. These noises have intensified and multiplied over the last twenty years that I have resided in this town, and not only as a result of automotive and aerial traffic, but also because of the automatic machines that are spreading all over the landscape and in houses. The acoustic fabric has changed—the number of human beings, animals and bells that once composed it has considerably diminished. Silence is not even obtained in the depths; when the fighter jet roars overhead, I see the fish convulsively stiffen in the basin in the garden and dive to the bottom.

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<sup>123</sup> *Taurita (Stierlein)*: an affectionate nickname used by Jünger in his diaries to refer to his second wife, Liselotte, whom he married, at his second wedding, in 1962. It is an allusion to the astrological sign of Taurus.

The four of us were seated at the table, where the pitcher with the magic mushrooms was set. The water had softened them; each of us began to chew two or three. They were hard and fibrous, they tasted like mould and humus.

Mushrooms participate in a special way in the cycle of birth and death. They are closer to the earth than the green plants, just as snakes are, compared to other animals. In both cases, the body is less differentiated; the foot dominates. In compensation, the wealth of salutary and lethal forces is greater—as is their role in the heritage of the mysteries. Old gunpowder-head<sup>124</sup> knew why he saw the serpent as the wisest of the animals.

As usual, we spent half an hour or a little longer sitting in silence. Then the first signs came: the flowers on the table began to blaze and radiate a brilliant light. It was Saturday evening; outside, as on every weekend, the streets were being swept. The strokes of the broom lacerated the silence.

These scrapings and sweepings, joined now and then by a scratching sound, a dull blow, a resounding crash and banging, were produced at random but were at the same time symptomatic, as one of the signs that herald the onset of illness. It always plays a role in the history of magic spells. Görres reports on its existence in Egypt, Gottfried Keller on its existence in Switzerland. It is necessary to have experienced such a detail, then one knows its place. There are rare insects hiding everywhere, you only need an entomologist to explore the countryside to see them. Before Sunday arrives, the streets are swept, the litter is taken away, the town is cleaned; before the door is opened, one calls out and knocks. Nothing is more natural. The festival is less an interruption of everyday life than its elevation to a higher plane of meaning. Whatever we may ordinarily do almost instinctively, we become conscious of in a higher sense.

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From that moment, the mushroom began to take effect; the bouquet of spring flowers gleamed with an intense color, it did not seem to be a natural light. The shadows pulsed in every corner, as if they yearned to become embodied. I felt oppressed and overcome by a sense of coldness, despite the heat emitted by the stove. I reclined on the sofa and covered myself with the blanket right up to my chin.

Everything was skin and tactile, even my retina—there, contact distilled multicolor light; it was arranged into cords that oscillated smoothly, in strings of crystalline pearls that evoke oriental chambers. They form doors like those that we cross in dreams, curtains of voluptuousness and danger. The wind makes them flutter like a robe. They also hang from the waists of the dancers, they open and close with the swaying of their hips, and a drizzle of extremely subtle sounds falls from the pearls and permeates my sharpened senses. The tinkling of silver rings on ankles and wrists is now very intense. I smelled sweat, blood, tobacco, the dirty manes of horses, cheap rosewater scent. Who knows what goes on in the stables?

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<sup>124</sup> Jünger's nickname for Nietzsche in both *On the Marble Cliffs* and *Heliopolis*.



It had to be a gigantic palace, Mauretanian, a place that was not at all pleasant. These dance chambers took the form of contiguous pieces, all in a line until they were lost in the distance. And everywhere, brilliant curtains, sparkling—radioactive splendor.

Furthermore, the drizzle of crystal instruments seduced, sensually solicited: “Would you like to come with me, you handsome young man?” Now it ceased, then it returned, more demanding, more penetrating, almost certain of my connivance.

Then came something with form: historical *collages*, the human *vox*, the call of the cuckoo. Was it the whore of Santa Lucia, who showed her tits in the window? Then your pay was gone. Salome danced; her amber necklace sparkled and made her nipples harden when it brushed against them. What would she not do for her Saint John?<sup>125</sup>—damnation, it was a repugnant obscenity, but it did not come from me, it was murmured from behind the curtain.

The serpents of the swamp, at the dawn of life, lie coiled lazily on the doormat. Their skin was decorated with glittering scales. Other serpents watched us with ruby and emerald eyes from the wooden paneling. Whispering and brilliance, whistling and glow, are mixed, like those minuscule sickles with which the witch of the harvest reaps the stems. Then the sound grew quiet and then returned, softer, more urgent. I was enchanted. Then “we understood each other”.<sup>126</sup>

My wife parted the curtains; she was busy, she walked past me, without looking directly at me. I saw her boots, with their red heels. Her garters hung down her thick thighs, in the middle; the flesh formed flaps from above. Monstrous breasts, the dark delta of the Amazon, parrots, piranhas, pebbles, everywhere.

She went to the kitchen—or did we have a pantry, too? I could no longer distinguish between the brilliance and the gleam, the whistling and the glow; it was as if now everything was concentrated, enormously happy and expectant.

The heat became unbearable; I tossed the blanket aside. The room was dimly lit; the pharmacologist was standing next to the window, wearing a white mandarin kimono, which I had worn only a little while before at the Rottweil carnival. The orientalist was sitting next to the ceramic stove; he was moaning as if he was in the throes of a nightmare.

Now I realized; it was a first assault, and it would not be long before it was repeated. Time had still not passed. I had seen the little mother with the changing face. But the mud is also earth, subject, like gold, to metamorphoses. One must resign oneself to this, as long as approach has not been consummated.

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<sup>125</sup> *Johannes* (John), in the German vernacular, designates the penis.

<sup>126</sup> From a poem by Heinrich Heine: “When we in the mud descended / Soon we understood each other.”

Thus were the mushrooms of the earth.<sup>127</sup> More light was concealed in the dark ergot that is separated from the ear of the rye plant, and even more yet in the green sap of the fat little plants that grow on the torrid slopes of Mexico. Mistletoe probably harbors even greater, unexplored secrets, but secrets that have been sensed from the most remote times. The spirit of the earth reveals its power in a protean diversity, in the *shums* as well as on the opulent Avenues, in the *Suburra* as well as on the Capitol. De Quincey saw the *consul romanus* in triumph and Nietzsche saw the bestial Caesar, when “Rome grew a whore, a brothel she grew”.

Shortly after the ascent, there was a hint of a let-down—perhaps I should take another mushroom. However, the whispers and the murmurings, the brightness and the shining lights, returned again—the bait dragged the fish after it. Once the motif is given, it is engraved as on the roll of a barrel organ—the new assault, the new turn repeats the melody. The game does not lead beyond this roll of evils.

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I do not know how often it was repeated, nor do I wish to go into details. It is preferable to treat certain things with discretion. In any case, it was past midnight when we were once again sitting around the table and conversing. We also heard something from the floor above. From there, a melody descended, of an incredible and enchanting delicacy, which dissolved in an Eleusinian aura of the Spirit of the Earth:

“This portrait is enchantingly beautiful.”<sup>128</sup>

No Titus, no Caesar, had ever thus made his entry. If we could have this passport to present at the last threshold—the bolts of the door would fly open. The music of Mozart and the mussel, that heart of the sea.

We went upstairs; dinner was served. Our senses were still keen and open: “The doors of perception.” The light flowed from the red wine in the carafe, a ring of foam broke over the rim. We listened to a flute concerto.

It could not have been better for the others: “How nice it is to be among humans again.”

Those were the words of Albert Hofmann, who had sojourned in endless cities of ancient Mexico, among palaces whose rooms were paneled with gold, with columns and staircases of precious stones, in a labyrinthine search for human beings in a world of geometrical beauty, in silence without an echo, light without shadow. But it was a necropolis, like the City of Brass of Emir Musa, over which no bird ever flew: a solitary magnificence, remote and deserted.

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<sup>127</sup> He is speaking of psilocybin mushrooms, used by the shaman María Sabina in her healing ceremonies. It was from this natural substrate that Albert Hofmann synthesized psilocybin, whose psychoactive power is similar to that of LSD.

<sup>128</sup> The first words of Tamino’s aria, in the first act of *The Magic Flute*.

The orientalist, on the other hand, had been in Samarkand, where Tamerlane lay in his sarcophagus of jade. He had followed the triumphal procession through cities whose wedding gifts to the conqueror upon his entry were baskets full of eyes. There he had remained for a long time, next to one of the pyramids of skulls that were erected to daunt the people, and he had recognized his own head in the ossuary of decapitated heads. It was encrusted with precious stones.

The pharmacologist had a sudden revelation when he heard the orientalist's account: "Now I know why you were sitting on that chair without a head—I was amazed; I could not have been mistaken."

I ask myself if I should not have omitted this detail, since it brushes up against the borders of ghost stories.

"We shall not content ourselves with ghosts."

"Nor with miracles, they are shortcuts."

"Even Görres had descended below his level when he addressed this theme."

*"Une jolie femme a bien d'autres moyens de faire la charité."*

"Ah, it will never be so beautiful again."

## ***LSD, again***

**295**

I was still capable, at the right place and time, of rediscovering ergot of rye as the *missing link* [in English in the original]. For a long time I had kept three glass vials of the "extract of its subtly mortal sap", along with the Mexican oddities that Guido had brought to my house from his excursions. Last Thursday, Albert Hofmann arrived from Switzerland for the purpose of correcting my opinion about his synthesis. "Synthesis": this is what we call an operation, which should not be precisely delimited as either a discovery or as an invention. Everything is discovered; we lift the veil that covers nature and its forces, into whose heart we shall never penetrate. This is dangerous, and so it was in this case. From this overabundance, we extract what we think is to our benefit. We bleed the wealth from the Great Mother. The technological world is not just a mill, but also a central milking machine. This is already visible even in the form of retorts. In this landscape, not only does a subtle grinding and threshing take place, but so too is the sap sucked and distilled in millions of drilling platforms and gas stations. We even milk the rays of light and the air.

Today, we must not worry about such things; after breakfast, we took another trip, which ended at nightfall. Against all expectations, I managed to take some notes—this proves,

furthermore, that I am now an experienced traveler at such latitudes. Here is my travel log, without commentaries:

*Wilflingen, February 7, 1970*

10:25—No nail file to open the vials; I had to have one brought from town.

LSD: E. J. 150 *gammas* or 0.15 mg, A. H. 100 *gammas* or 0.10 mg.

Dissolved in a small glass of water, a light fluorescence.

“Know nothing.”

“Nothing is a dangerous business.”

“Bon voyage!”

Conversation about synthetic materials. They, too, are nothing but building blocks that we lay in one place or another. Shaped bricks that come from clay, discoveries, not inventions. Not even the growers of fancy greenhouse flowers can create them without seeds.

10:45—A. H. feels the first effect. Tightness in his shoulders, fatigue. “Even more somatic.” Record player: Mozart.

10:55—*Concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major*. A finch is pecking on the windowsill. Did you hear something? You hear everything, when you descend far enough towards the bottom of the undifferentiated.

The finches are pecking at seeds from a small paper bag, whose yellow color is now becoming intense. And the limestone surface is also acquiring, with the petrified fish, an intense orange, which I have never observed before, not even in the direct sunlight. The bricks in one of the towers of Stauffenberg have turned red as if it was sunset. Wherever a layer of moss had formed, the green also became very vivid. The color blue, however, remained entirely subdued. Otherwise, we are dead, industrial, barren colors.

I am sitting in my studio, A. H. is in the library. It is starting to snow.

11:15—The blue is now also becoming more intense. The color black is still lifeless. I ask myself whether I should go to the library. It might give him a good scare.

I feel the need to lie down. The music of Mozart evokes “porcelain figures that dance a minuet”. Therefore, still dead.

“What if we can still do *it*? It would be, anyway, a test.”

“Oh, you know, *that* does not require any effort.”

11:40—“Do you want to sleep?”

“It is not a dream.”

“It would also be serious.”

11:50—The external world never ceases to disturb. Bulldozers. But now those murmurs ... as if two people were whispering in one of the *separée* of the universe.

“They are buffoons.”

The bells are ringing. “Better than machines.”

Is our perception becoming more acute? Or has matter become more conspicuous? We will never be able to fathom it.

12:10—Our ship is rocking violently. Towards sobriety, too.

12:45—For a moment I was alone with myself—with himself. Then to A. H.: “Now something better. Better, yes, better.... although still not quite everything.”

For a moment identity.

13:00—Soaring like an eagle.

A. H.: “There is nothing comparable in our language. But it comes from another world.”

We now enter other spaces, where peace reigns. Only those who know war know the meaning of peace.

A. H.: “The blue is turning transparent.”

E. J.: “The name Hofmann, too.”

13:15—Absolute wellbeing. As if a rich spring had burst forth even at the very heart of phenomena.

13:16—Another attempt to fly like an eagle. Not only the edges, but the whole fabric of the linen, violet.

13:30—E. J.: “I no longer need reinforcements.”

A. H.: “I think that is enough.”

13:50—Again: the position of the eagle—the flight of the eagle. Three times: the wing feathers!

14:00—The final and most subtle approach—the wing of he who wants to sacrifice himself.

14:35—“Long” absence.

15:00—Flight of the eagle. Identity.

15:23—Three wing feathers.

15:30—Spring arrives. It was the most enchanting accord, more subtle with the return.

16:35—Radiant blue.

A. H.: “I vividly feel the beauty of this space ... therefore, it must come from somewhere else.”

17:15—Leaps of the eagle, three.

With nightfall we began to converse: we came down. The flight had been a success—only the machines caused some annoyance; their rhythm is the main enemy both of meditation as well as of the vibrations of the Muses. Mechanized, brutal will; we are either crushed or galvanized.

We should choose spaces in remote gardens, with simple and solid furniture. Little metal, preferably bronze; much quality wood, like the kind that is used by the craftsmen who manufacture violins; wicker matting; thatch roofs. No breathtaking panoramas, no views of the sea or the mountains—a pond would be sufficient, a few walls, not too high, on which a lizard lies.

Then we took a walk around the town, each of us lost in thought, before we sat down at the table. The snow had melted and it began to freeze again; the emanations were still vivid; the snow gleamed like glaze fresh out of a hot oven.

## ***Peyote***

**296**

We began to build the house starting from the roof: Europe, the East, Mexico. First of all, pure pleasure with its advantages and dangers, then adventure with its fantastic, esthetic and spiritual regions, and finally approaches, for which, in the past, we would have run the risk of being burned or venerated, and whose names have survived. The word crystallizes.

This last chapter is, like the previous ones, intended to deal with the topic more from a thematic than a chronological point of view.

## 297

When I moved from Überlingen to Kirchhorst, I expected an epoch of more modest labor. But when, from my desk, I saw the street through the garden of the house of the parish priest, I began to suspect that it would be a long time before I would be able to realize such a desire: there, everything vibrated, increasingly more vividly and in a more and more threatening manner.

In this period of transition, I was invited once, along with Sieburg, Pückler and others, to Fuschl; the invitation came from Ribbentrop, who was thinking of some kind of *brain-trust* [in English in the original], where an introductory panorama of the foreign policy situation would be offered. In this affair, I was not able to make much of a contribution—a circumstance that had been repeated on various occasions in my life. The description of this journey—I travelled in an airplane from Frankfurt to Salzburg and back—offered Friedrich Sieburg, by the way, material for one of his brilliant anecdotal pieces.

I returned to Kirchhorst in a mood of tranquil satisfaction, thinking that I would play a game of poker. This was undoubtedly my intention. That, *at bottom*, I knew better, was proven to me by the text of *On the Marble Cliffs*, which then took up almost all my time. That narrative belongs less to the literary field than to the visionary field—an example of what they call in Westphalia, and also here in Lower Saxony, a “fire alarm”.

The fact that that brief text would provoke, immediately and also during the first days of the war, such vehement political commentaries, was inevitable and just, to the extent that fate was also orchestrated politically.

Basically, the war was lost before it even began. In any case, our consciousness has many layers, and vision rarely reaches the bottom. Sometimes, I thought that I had been deceived—thus with the entry of the troops into Paris. Later, once again, I felt confirmed in my opinion by a series of details that were impossible to *foresee*, thus, on July 20, 1944—when we would speak of a “bad awakening”, adjusted to such a situation. Only seldom do we know the content of the dreams that have preceded.

## 298

The rustic solitude that was so dear to my hopes had been banished for many years. Meditations, prolonged reading, walks on the moors and the wooded plains, little get-togethers with a small circle of intimate friends, all had been banished. It was necessary to bring an end to a plethora of encounters. I do not want to reckon all of this as a loss. Human beings certainly cause harm, but also bring advantages. Particularly at the Majestic, where they are now debating Vietnam, people were always coming and going. There, I saw the palette in all of its range of colors: from the chief of staff to the telephone operator, from the highest echelons of the SS to the proscribed Jew—idealists

and realists, persecutors and persecuted, authors of assassination attempts, murderers, suicides.

All of these visits continued when I returned again to Kirchhorst. There was still a sense of unease in the air even several years after the entry of foreign troops. The house of the parish priest was located on the Hannover-Hamburg road—at the time, the highway did not yet exist. Cars followed one after another in a closely-packed line all along the old military avenue of Celle, whose cobblestones were polished by their wheels. Visitors came to spend a few minutes, a few hours or a day; many also stayed for a whole year.

One of my regular guests was Walter Frederking, a doctor from Hamburg, whom Keyserling once described as one of our most gifted psychotherapists. At the time he was treating my editor, Benno Ziegler, who was suffering from Bulbar Paralysis, a brain disease that is fortunately very rare. To be diagnosed with this disease amounts to a death sentence. Ziegler also visited me a few times; he offered me the distressing spectacle of a progressive decline. The symptoms of this illness include the gradual paralysis of the organs of speech, which among other manifestations implies the progressive incapacity to pronounce certain sounds. In his visits to the Majestic, Benno had already displayed an ominous aspect for cares that not only concerned his own fate. His wife suffered terribly from “second sight” and predicted the details of the catastrophe, which were later confirmed. Then new storm clouds gathered.

At first, I was fascinated by his views on the situation and his plans; he possessed an intelligent, active spirit, thanks to which he had attained, from very modest beginnings, an influential position. But the time came when he no longer paid attention to the content, but only to the form, of his words—to that whole vital apparatus which we cannot dispense with. There he had, once again, something that failed, as if a button did not work or a typographical character were erased. Then came attacks of asthma—he retired to the door to cough, while he pressed a tissue to his mouth. Afterwards we would continue with our conversation, as if nothing had happened—it was, however, disturbing.

In many illnesses, days and weeks will pass by during which the patient is no longer capable of speaking. Then we were obliged to look, in our wordless treasury, for coins that have not yet been coined so that the sick person feels that he can confide in us.

## 299

Concerning the outcome, there could be no doubt; but the aspect that displayed such sufferings is dramatic—the temporal decomposes, very close and unmistakable, with its terrors. It seemed to the doctor that the patient was at fault because he did not want to face up to his situation, but instead stubbornly submerged himself in his own private affairs. “He has not yet realized the seriousness of the situation.”

However, these small setbacks are precisely the most painful: the last trip you take, the last time you leave your house, the last time you sign your name. He still wrote his name



on a postal money order, when the post office and even the world of names and numbers disappeared, as if they had exited the stage in the theater.

It seems to me that, in such cases, the therapist enters the domains of the priest. It is true that neither of the two can be denied the right, assuming that they have something to offer. Only then can they lead us by the hand, far away, towards the nameless and even a little further.

To what extent Frederking possessed this gift is something that is beyond my knowledge; in any case, I have heard him praised as a guide for patients who find that their vehicles have seriously broken down. At the time, besides “autogenous training”, he was also involved in “narco-analysis”, and therefore in the investigation of psychic problems in a state of profound ecstatic intoxication induced *ad hoc*. Sufferings that remain hidden, often, from the very person who endures them, must be made conscious and cured. To “conjure them” by way of the word or to give them a name can be enough as a remedy. Already, by itself, ecstatic intoxication can provoke a catharsis: purification. At the same time it can cause harm. These are drastic remedies, which not every patient can endure and not every doctor feels the vocation to administer.

Did Frederking introduce ecstatic intoxication with mescaline in the therapeutic arts? In any case, he was one of the first to use the drug for such a purpose. In essays published in *Medizinischer Monatsspiegel* and in *Psyche*, he goes into details. We elaborated on this theme, after conversing on Benno’s condition; later, when I moved to Swabia, we exchanged letters for a time. As my files show, our correspondence lasted fifteen years until Frederking’s death.

### 300

It was inevitable that we would agree to a session. At that time, mescaline excited my imagination with the prospect of all kinds of fabulous adventures. They were based on the monograph of Beringer, who had carried out experiments with the substance in Freiburg, and on the chronicles of travelers.

We did not make our first appointment until January 1950, when I moved to Ravensburg. We wanted to meet in Stuttgart; there, Ernst Klett had built a new house on a slope in the southern zone, replacing the house that was destroyed. It was spacious; the roof was covered with thatch, the walls with books—except for the large window in the front room which looked out upon a very populous neighborhood. The horizon ended, on the opposite slope, in a forest. The garden, an old vineyard with reddish clumps of soil, was situated in such a way that it faced the sun with so much protection that the Paulownia tree formed robust branches and the emerald lizard survived the winter.

From that January day, house and garden were indelibly engraved in my memory. The Paulownia tree had acquired Mexican contours; the lights, which glittered below in the blocks of houses and moved up the slopes of the mountains, assumed at moments the magic of a blizzard of cosmic snow. It can also happen that I am suddenly surprised to

find myself in Mexico, on a street or at a train station. Human beings and things are mixed all together in all of it. I mention this because it leads us to the conclusion that engrams leave a profound imprint.

I cannot recall the exact date of our meeting; just then I had a lot of other things on my mind. The house was too small; I was obliged to leave some of my books behind, and others were piled up in the vestibule. The manuscript advanced with difficulty; our correspondence was not going very well. The Mediterranean was still forbidden to me, that great, time-honored source of serenity. Banine<sup>129</sup> tried very hard to obtain a visa for me; but in vain. She had a falling-out with Perpetua—or, more accurately, she had once again taken advantage of an opportunity to get angry with me. She went to Goslar, where we had spent a series of happy years before the war.

People with hot tempers do not hold a grudge: they soon forget. When she disembarked from the train at Goslar and Fritz Lindemann asked her what had happened, her anger had already cooled. “Bah! Another row with the old man”, and she had been thinking in these terms for about half the return trip. For me, my anger would usually last longer. When Martin said of me, “He is not loyal, but he is devoted,” this is also true of my bad moods. The waves do not break at a great height, but, like the tide, only recede very slowly.

These are different, even Zodiacal temperaments. One day, while I was eating breakfast, she was reading an astrological column and suddenly said, “Of course, I have already said it: Aries devours Pisces.” It is true that my reply—“there are whales, too”—was not entirely correct from a zoological point of view, but I had expressed it as a polite rejoinder and that is how she received it. She was splendid in her sentiments, thoughts and actions. Theodor Heuss once said to me that, “She is a woman to whom you could entrust three estates”. Unfortunately, I did not have such properties in my possession.

That morning, then, I was in a bad mood; the house was unfurnished and unheated. Besides, I was obliged to get up early to arrive in Stuttgart on time. The alarm clock is an appliance that I have always hated. I went to the train station without breakfast, after having cleared my head with a cold bath.

Walter Frederking was waiting for us in Stuttgart; we immediately got to work. By chance, Mathias Wieman was at home; his presence was comforting, as usual. He had to leave on a long trip, however, later; he was only able to attend the preliminaries of our session. We did, however, incite him to carry out his own personal experiment, which he undertook, a short time later, with his wife, Erika.

The first lift-off took place at about three in the afternoon, and an hour later we took a second dose, which made the trip last for approximately twelve hours. Frederking also

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<sup>129</sup> A Moslem writer, later a convert to Catholicism, and a refugee in Paris during the Occupation, where she associated with Jünger and introduced him to Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*. The product of these encounters was a book of dialogues.

indulged in a small dose, obeying one of the rules of the Persian, Yazdi: “In mixed company, the non-smokers must at least partake symbolically of a small piece.”

I came prepared with paper and pen, but I could not write down even one word. The doctor had warned me in advance. After spending about an hour experiencing mild nausea, I was stunned by a bang that sounded like a pistol shot. Our host’s wife had opened a jar of instant coffee next to me. Immediately afterward, a fern began to come to life in a flowerpot, moving in a way that was both vital and mechanical, as if a chain of caterpillars were advancing—or it could be the segments of a green centipede.

That was the beginning. A private exhibition (*Vorweisung*) absorbs and captivates us. It was as if an artillery piece had fired and was echoing or as if a banner was raised over great spectacles: ex-hibition (*Vor-weisung*). If we turn our head and look back, there is someone right behind us. This is certainly how the modern world must be seen, the precision, the extraordinary force that drives its events. This reveals the essence of the signs.

We were immersed in visions, meditations, visual and auditory perceptions of images and compositions, until six in the evening, when the world had already completely wound down, but at the same time the tension increased painfully. It was as if the flow of images was no longer sufficient; they had to fall back to the rear. We insisted on taking a third, stronger dose; the doctor thought this was reasonable.

If you want to make sure that such incremental additions are fruitful you have to add a big leap forward in quantity to your quality. It is analogous, if we wish to use an image from mechanics, to breaking the sound barrier. The jet reaches a border where the accumulated air is traumatically breached, and with it the vehicle enters a new phase: supersonic flight.

This is, as I said, a crude example taken from the physical-titanic world, but it is typical of its insatiable voracity and of its tendency to “escalate”. After generating an extraordinary momentum, gravity is overcome along with sound. At the critical points, and with regard to thermodynamics as well, there is no more elevation, but there are surprises. It is likely that such a point is to be found where time and eternity are contiguous.

### 301

Frederking had drafted some protocols. It is hardly worth the trouble to quote them, since these forms of verbal fixation affect the experience. In any event, Frederking’s abilities embraced much more than psychologists could offer, in general, or than they claim to offer. In him there was something that no specialist should lack and whose absence turns knowledge insipid, as if it lacked salt—I am referring to the artistic substance. I had felt it immediately in him, since without that requirement we would not have stayed in touch with each other for such a long time, but that night this substance became more evident, as in

general happens to the substantial behind phenomena. And I also told him this, and I would like to quote the following passage from his report:

“17:10—“How powerfully the world can expand! More than a century. No, it is the stone age, with fish and saurians. Then one observes Frederking. A man who is sensitive to art, a great man. It is surprising that I had not seen him earlier.”

He does not mention the fact that, once again, from the next room, he approached, dancing a Chinese dance. He had a lampshade on his head, as if it was a conical straw hat worn by the peasants of the rice paddies and he asked: “What do you think of me?”

“Now he looks Portuguese. He is in a dark house and is contemplating a town square illuminated by the sun. Between the square and the house, the *persiana*. He follows her with his eyes. Now the house becomes completely dark, as if the darkness was concentrated in an inkwell.”

### 302

I repeated this excursion two more times in company and once alone. I did not succeed in re-experiencing the intensity of the first trip. Erika Wiemann wrote to me after her experience, and told me that it was incomprehensible to her that anyone would risk doing such a thing a second time—she recalled voyages that were in part sublime, in part frightening, in halos and bathyspheres. Besides, she had observed me and a few of our mutual friends, and expressed a view that would later be confirmed. Some of us stared with wide open eyes from the open spaces under the trees, like owls, like birds of ill omen.

Mathias added: “Of course—and I seem to see it clearly, again, in the presence of Erika—it is a necessary foretaste, an eruption in that interregnum, where the soul spends its first season, after having abandoned the body. I am uncertain whether a violence of this type, which employs chemistry and alchemy instead of levers and gears, is not a sacrilege; whether the legitimate road does not lead to enlightenment by means of fasting and prayer, by seclusion and looking inward, whether the human being would be better off with spiritual guidance rather than magical trances.”

This recalls Baudelaire’s assessment. But neither of them has paid attention to the prescribed rules of the game—and have come out winners.

Once is enough—in this respect, he is obliged to admit that Erika is right. Gurdjieff was also of this opinion, at least with regard to adepts. The latter have gained an image of the dimensions, within which they move like blind men, they have plumbed, just once, the abysses that yawn under the keel of their ship. There, they are allowed to touch bottom, and this disembarkation is a long-lasting settlement.

### 303

I think the following situation led to a bad trip—an afternoon gathering, which Frederking had harmonized by way of doses tailored to the various spirits; in this sense, he was a connoisseur of scenic arts. His wife was also present.

That night, the lights flickered below, at a distance that surpassed that of the galaxies. It was not a spatial difference. They were not malign lights, as in the paintings of Bosch—lifeless, impossible to revive, a crystallized nothingness. The cosmic cave was deserted and desolate—it did not want to shine any new light. It was even a situation in which it was disdainful of all of this.

No less melancholy was my solitary excursion in Ravensburg, which lasted until nightfall. I was sitting by the window and looking at the snow-covered field. The snow is iridescent, as every painter knows quite well—but that day it radiated, in emanations increasingly more vivid, clouds and waves of luminous matter. Interwoven in this blanket of snow, minuscule sparks glittered, *scintillulae*. The flames flickered.

In those environs I also felt the distance—I heard a dog howling, it was the Wolf of Fenris. From the foam that splashed from his jaws the Milky Way was born. But here, space did not lack life; it pulsated with expectation. Half of my being breathed empathy, but the sinister predominated. I paced back and forth, I made myself comfortable in the armchair, and observed the books. Their spines rose up like towers—I was not conscious of how much energy was concealed here. That they were printed, that they had frontispieces and texts, was irrelevant, it was the simple reflection, a Platonic shadow, of a spiritual power. Authorship was a minor loan limited in time.

I could not bear to always see phenomenon that way, not even a simple phenomenon. It is good that our perception filters it, that our senses divide it, that the word fixes it. I went to the other room, where my son was sitting at the table; he had just finished eating. My wife came through the door with the gesture of a priestess, her hands crossed over her breast. Her smock hung down to the floor. She was standing, it is true, in a dark part of the room; I saw her attending to her duties and her responsibilities, and I also saw the totemic animal of the sun, just as I had seen the books.

Everything was in order, all was going well. So I sat there a long time, contemplating the two of them in a silent and peaceful room. Just as previously the fire was engendered from the snow, now my power and my confidence flowed. When I reflected on this later, I realized that I had not spoken a single word.

Insurmountable distances seemed to promise to cleave us from being, if the approach is frustrated.<sup>130</sup> But if it succeeds, being will begin to concentrate; outside and inside, past and future, begin to merge, the world becomes hospitable.

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<sup>130</sup> On the experience of the “bad trip”—“... one has abandoned the train of causality and no longer has any connection. Who knows in what train station in the universe one finds oneself”—see the note dated July 1, 1945 in *Radiaciones II*, tr. Andrés Sánchez Pascual, Tusquets Editores (Andanzas 98/2), Barcelona, 1992, p. 443.

Anxiety is born from the perception of the sinister. This disturbing guest approaches us and penetrates into our entrails. But only thus does the mask fall and we recognize that the sinister is in reality our home—only by passing through estrangement can we recover the confidence in what is normal.

### 304

It is dangerous to reconnoiter frontiers with others, where the *behaviour* [in English in the original] in which we dress ourselves and in which we take pleasure becomes transparent. We experience this when we go on drinking binges and even more wherever ecstatic intoxication batters down doors that everyone thought were locked shut, even to them. In his treatise on opium, Yazdi says, for this reason, that one must not smoke alone, nor should one smoke in the presence of strangers.

In any case, propriety, when it is authentic, is rooted in the undifferentiated. We see it in sick people who still strive to keep up appearances, even when it is hard to speak—“they still have their dignity”.

States of mind of ecstatic intoxication do not strictly deviate from the norm; they are interwoven on the margins of everyday life. The thread certainly takes on an unusual color, but it is woven throughout the whole cloth. This entails certain bold actions and misunderstandings, which are characterized by the effect of comedy—reality plays on diverse planes.

Scenes of this kind can appear in Mexican festivals. It is the usual practice for them to start early in the day because they ordinarily last a very long time, and keeping order in the house poses requirements—particularly in epochs when a shortage of lay brethren and sisters is becoming increasingly more obvious. But they have to be reckoned with, too, or at least they have to be pleased, so that they can be ready, as in an opera, where no one delivers a letter or sweeps the floor without singing. This makes life in cities like Naples easier, *a priori*, while in the North the people are content with the *libretto*, when they do not just remain silent.

We are now very animated and carrying on a natural conversation, while the mistress of the house has gone downstairs to the ground floor to prepare a snack. She soon returned, horrified, and told us that the fried eggs had come alive in the pan. Suddenly, they formed yellow cones. The devil held sway down there—the environment was suffocating and sinister. Was something burning? Yes, it was the central heating. Perhaps we should go downstairs and set things in order—but first we should take off our jackets.

For a moment a breeze blew from downstairs, as if it came from a den of evil death; the atmosphere became confused. But it was temporary and was nothing but a strange sensation; listening to bad music would have been dangerous.

### 305

One cannot say that mescaline is as inoffensive a substance as Huxley claims it is. It is true that the kind of harm that it could be expected to inflict is less serious if you compare it with the damage caused by alcohol, tobacco or pills. But one must take into consideration that mescaline reinforces the initial state of the person who takes it, which might be weak or confused. Thus, a child could acquire, like the sorcerer's apprentice, a power that he is not capable of controlling or that might reinforce his tyrannical inclinations. It could also potentiate the banal, as in the case of the typist who had visions of mountains of whipped cream.

In such a case, one does not take a "trip through some chemical Door in the Wall into the world of transcendental experience", nor does one attain to the "brief but timeless illumination" that Huxley yearns for, and rightly so, in our study programs. In this respect there is nothing to do, for

"If they were to possess the philosopher's stone,  
the philosopher would miss his stone."

We must point out that the Mexican drugs are not erotic stimulants like ether and alcohol. They lead to deeper sources of character than the crux that divides the sexes. Character receives influences from gender, but it is not determined by gender. Thus, a graphologist can offer a good analysis, even if he is unaware of the gender of his subject. Age, education, the style of the epoch and temperaments confer a more constraining imprint.

The risk is of another kind. In an instant one can recognize what, otherwise, would take years to be revealed. No confession goes so deep.

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By the way, where does this sudden feeling of resistance that we experience when we read words like "transcendental" come from? Undoubtedly from the fact that the categorical delimitations of idealism no longer allow us to divide the cosmos. Certainly, we do not have a better knowledge, but we do have a different kind of sight. Just as there is a grammatical instinct, so, too, is there a philosophical instinct.

### ***Refined matter***

**306**

I quote: "What is even more disputable about the character of revelation of some of the experiments with mescaline is the circumstance that the *mysterium tremendum* not only emanates indistinctly from an object, but also from expressly banal objects" (Dr. Peter Ringger).

Thus, describing an experiment he conducted on himself, the author points out how he remained, for a very long time, absorbed in the contemplation of a half-open door.... “It seemed to me as if I had in my hands the meaning of the world.”

On this point I can only disagree. Perception of that kind or that kind of capacity for perception is a sign that we have advanced a long way towards approach. A door begins to open—this is certainly an everyday banality. But already in Rembrandt this everyday banality becomes disturbing. He not only painted the door, but also what was hidden behind it. The door begins to open ... we are scheduled to be tried in court or we have been called upon to testify as witnesses, the judge enters the courtroom to pronounce the verdict, the doctor returns from the radiology lab, we experience the tribulations of the proscribed, the raptures of the lover who has waited all day long for his beloved. All of this orchestrates, with clear and obscure sounds, the symphony of fate.

The door is like a mirror—it returns to us the usual image. However, now it becomes transparent. Or even better: we begin to suspect that it can become transparent. It is not this or that particular fate, with its fleeting happiness or misfortune, which will enter. Time is now raised like a curtain. Not this or that fate, but fate *in summa*, fate as a solid mass, which projects its shadow ahead of it.

### 307

“At the instant of death we penetrate the substance of history.” One of the best sayings of Léon Bloy.<sup>131</sup> In such an approach the episodic becomes irrelevant, while matter begins to radiate with greater intensity. The door, the gate, acquires meaning in itself—the narrow way and the valley of shadows become even more narrow, they are transformed into the Bridge of Sirat, which separates time and eternity like the blade of a knife. Among millions of temporal passages only one counts, which, like the unit in the cosmos of numbers, is concealed in all of them.

The cross is perceived with more force and with more power, when it is lowered to the one who is to be crucified. The prophets saw more, the evangelists less—thus it is for all consummation in time. The Moon landing is one of the examples with respect to our time. Here one must seek, among other things, one of the reasons why the Jews did not accept the Messiah. We are even less capable of accepting the Moon in the form in which it has been offered to us.

Nevertheless, being was concentrated then, as epiphany, in the phenomenon, while today it is flattened out. Hills and crosses were extremely abundant. After having defeated

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<sup>131</sup> An untimely Catholic and apocalyptic critic of bourgeois democracy, Léon Bloy exercised a notable influence on the work of Jünger. The interested reader may refer to a good sample from his diaries in the excellent translation of Cristóbal Serra: Léon Bloy, *Mis diarios*, Bitzoc, Palma de Mallorca, 1998; and also some of his most important essays, such as *La salvación de los judíos*, *La sangre del pobre*, and *En las tinieblas*, Hysamérica, Madrid, 1988, edited by Manuel Serrat Crespo.



Spartacus, Pompey ordered that the main road to Naples should be lined with crucified prisoners. But only once has the hill of the world appeared at Calvary, and in the cross the universal fate of man. For an instant the door opened; the curtain was torn down. This has lasted for two thousand years.

This is how we should view the door, just as we should see the cross. If we were to live in a mathematical world, the cosmos of numbers would have been arranged in this way: in the cross of the coordinates, as a basis for all arithmetical and geometrical operations. In a magical world, a splinter of its wood would become the goal of crusades and pilgrimages.

Bloy, who in our epoch has had a surprisingly sharp eye for signs and figures, says in one of his diary entries that, in any case, the form of the cross would have been realized in history. If Christ had been condemned to die by the sword, we would have venerated the hilt of the sword in the form of a cross, and if he had been stoned, then he would have died with his arms extended in the form of a cross. This is one example among many, one example above all for the concentration of being that manifests the real even while the real is disappearing. The more powerful the influx of reality, the more the outlines of names and dates are blurred. This is experienced in the form of a peculiar interweaving of apocalyptic feelings and an increasing sense of serenity.

### 308

Approach cannot stop with the father and the mother, with Adam and Eve, with the gods and the demigods, with the protozoa and crystals. Nor can it stop with the material that the psychologists bring to light.

Dostoyevsky mentions, in a letter to A. F. Blagonrovov dated December 9, 1880, the chapter in *Karamazov* in which he describes Ivan's conversation with the devil, and expresses his fear that he might be accused of bad taste or superstition for writing such things. And he adds: "I would be pleased if you would corroborate my opinion, as a doctor, as to just how faithful my description of the psychological illness of the hero of my novel actually is."

This passage conveys somewhat the impression of a prince of the spirit who is trying to obtain a passport and some spending money at a customs office, instead of passing through the wall and its guards. They are the signs of an epoch in which theology has lost power and clings to the apron-strings of science. Nietzsche also praised "the psychological mastery" of Dostoyevsky. Dostoyevsky exhibits that capacity that in our epoch forms part of the job of the psychologist and, certainly, of his analytical premises. One asks, as in every job, what it is good for and where it is leading. Psychological differentiation will end up dissipating into hot air rather than getting to the bottom of things.

### 309

In the meantime, the aspect of the spiritual passage has been radically transformed, and there are things that have benefited from passing through the fountain of youth of devaluation. They are contemplated from new perspectives, and for that reason they point towards new and distant horizons. In this context we must mention the fashionable word: “demystification”, even if only as a kinetic phenomenon, as a kind of clearance operation.

If, for example, I were to get rid of my theological furniture, and take down paintings, because they seem outdated to me, perhaps even because I find them disturbing, there would be empty spaces on the walls. Naturally, one’s glance does not fall on the empty space, but on that which the images represent. These have been disguised and covered up. The same thing often happens in one’s house or apartment, especially when moving—we take down a faded, yellowish painting, and behind it appears the wallpaper in its original color, not discolored by the light. This wallpaper represents the undifferentiated, and perhaps even the reticulum.

The force flows from those depths; not only have we become capable of creating new images, but also of seeing what the old images represented, of understanding the sacrifices that were offered to them. This is the stage that follows the transvaluation of values. More surely than the hammer, it heralds the new from which it has crossed the line.

Of course: the old images were not sufficient, and time will consume even the new ones. We do not penetrate into their heart. However, a new glance begins to be directed towards time and its diversity of forms, a glance that not only discerns the substance that is concealed behind the masks, but also in its own surface. The birth of the morphology of culture at the beginning of the century is a clear sign. This raising up of one stratum after another, each of which fascinates, while the last one never satisfies, as if one were to search under the ruins of cities that are constantly being destroyed, the Troy of the poet, belongs to the legacy of our experiences.

Certain attempts to refine materialism have had to precede this process. Not all of those who looked here for life found it. The sarcophagus with a lid of stone, wood and metal only conceals a mummy. However, the scarab is the herald of hidden riches. When its wing covers vibrate, everything, even the hardest rock, is restored to life.

### 310

This is the light of time, a whole separate theme. When we inspect this stratum, as laborers or as a mining foreman, as geologists, paleontologists, historians or specialists in prehistory, as speleologists or explorers of the ocean depths, we merely carry out attempts at resuscitation. Dinosaurs, Cro-Magnon men, pharaohs of the Valley of the Kings, Agamemnon of Mycenae, all of them erupt, conjured by knowledge, in our world. Naturally, everything is reduced to a play of shadows inside our cave—an allusion to the enormous density of the substance. They repose in the lap of an infinite and ineffable plenitude, at the margin of which we know something or nothing about their existence. “The resurrection”, like “the miracle”, is included among those auxiliary concepts, thanks

to which we get a glimpse of the inapprehensible. They are dissolutions of timeless powers by means of perception. A ray of light enters through the window; it is but one among many others, and only for that reason is it bearable.

“More light”<sup>132</sup> might also mean “only light” and, in this sense, one would have to understand the maxim as holy and as a sign of the transition.<sup>133</sup>

### *Scepticism of the will*

#### 311

The style that is being developed in our epoch is sober, objective and of an inexorable precision. At the same time, it is fantastic to an extreme degree—and it is our job to bring these two qualities to equilibrium in action and to their adjustment in contemplation. I dealt with this problem in a brief text entitled, *Sicilian Letter to the Man in the Moon* (1930),<sup>134</sup> to which I need add nothing more.

The style of the epoch also colors the exploration of those strata where events and objects are not present, but ideas, which are more important than voyages in the astronomical cosmos.

Gods, demons, ancestral spirits, totem animals, and immediate emanations of animate and inanimate nature, were in the past the objects of experience; the encounter signified for the participants and, often enough for the historical world as well, the advent of a new epoch. Here we will not engage in an exhaustive investigation and archeological survey, but instead, for an instant, the curtain will open, in close proximity to the timeless. In the Sacred Writings and in the myths of the peoples testimonies of this vision of the great mysteries have been preserved, a vision that is frightening rather than comforting. On the beach at Patmos and on the Sinai, the elements become fertile.

#### 312

From the encyclopedists to the textual critics and the declared nihilists, scepticism has provoked an overturning of the world of images, which has led to the cultural revolution.

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<sup>132</sup> Words attributed to Goethe on his deathbed.

<sup>133</sup> Like Nietzsche, Jünger establishes an association between *Übergang* and *Untergang*, between “transition” and “twilight”. On this point, see the excellent Spanish translation of *Así habló Zaratustra*, especially footnote 4 of the Alianza edition, in which Andrés Sánchez Pascual clarifies this crucial contraposition. If we recall, furthermore, that “ambush” in German is *Waldgang* (which in turn refers to *Todesgang*: “advance towards death”), one will get an idea of the multiple suggestions of the German term reduced by translation to “transition”.

<sup>134</sup> An English translation of “*Sicilian Letter to the Man in the Moon*” is available in Ernst Jünger, *The Adventurous Heart*, tr. Thomas Friese, Telos Press, Candor, N.Y., 2012, pp. 121-130 [American translator’s note].

The creation of a blank space, however, can only cover surfaces. When it becomes absolute, the process begins to change; monotony becomes eloquent.

When paintings were taken down in the past, what remained was not an empty space, but a vacant space. The radiation that emanates from this space can become so strong, that it begins to be dazzling. This applies not just to the undermining of images, but also to the attention that was previously concentrated on them. Sacrifice, prayer, and invocation, cease to exist, but they leave behind them an unsatisfied need. This need is not capable of being interpreted on its own terms, since it is deeply rooted in the *bios* and in its instincts: even the flower worships, when it turns towards the sun.

Here particular dangers are incubated, since if the vacuum absorbs that which disappears with the ebbing of the tide, certain primitive atavisms may be awakened. This explains not just the sectarianism that is flourishing everywhere, but also the idolatrous worship devoted to political scarecrows and their theories. Our intelligent contemporaries free themselves from the last inhibitions. A black who goes to the jungle to make an offering of a handful of fruit to his fetish not only works in a more reasonable way, but is also infinitely less dangerous.

By this I am referring to the excesses that are intimately related to our topic. They are concomitant phenomena of the Great Transition, of the changing times, of the time of changes.

### 313

Knowledge is beginning to animate epochs and spaces from the past; they are conjured. This can only be a beginning. In the caves of Lascaux, in the Valley of the Kings, at the Lion Gate of Mycenae, in the reborn Pompey, a shudder overtakes us, as if the Platonic shadows have become transparent—now something very archaic and very venerable can supervene.

Venerable, of course, only in the context of the unintelligible, which metamorphoses in the realm of illusions. This goes beyond spatial and temporal greatness, artistic glory, the real power. All of this was mortal, just like us, and it is immortal like us. Hence the sorrow of Emir Musa and the secret jubilation for the changes of time.

Archeology today is reckoned among the highly developed sciences, and this in the ambivalent sense of knowledge: both the knowledge of cognition as well as knowledge of approach.

### 314

Scepticism accompanies us like Mephistopheles, and without it we would not feel right, like Peter Schlemihl when he lost his shadow. These days, the man without scepticism is the naked being, the primitive, the easy prey of ridicule—in the best cases, he is ripe for

the museum. Eyeglasses are more than just a prosthesis; they are an article of our clothing.

Eyeglasses disillusion; it has long been the case that one only encounters visionaries among rustics. Only in dreams is scepticism unnecessary, and all attempts to fathom images do not reach the bottom. The ancients believed that in dreams we think and act like gods. The dream is a very powerful medium.

Finally, I do not want to forget repose in absolute blue, which does not extinguish images, but incorporates them, as if pieces of ice were melting in the still sea. It is not the blue of the Adriatic, or the blue of the Aegean or of the Pacific—perhaps the Mediterranean sea, or the ether of the most distant galaxies, has a similar radiance. In our epoch, the night no longer suffices as absolute repose.

### 315

When I disembark on this or that sphere of the psychic cosmos, I speak with the gods that live there, with Thor and Freya, with Brunhilda and Judith, with the crouching panther and the scarab, I do not doubt their power and their instruction; I have been dispossessed of my shadow, we are under a bright light.

However, when I return, I once again don my shadow. I did not yearn for a mitigation, but an amplification of consciousness—an objective and interpretable discovery. I can recount, or I can also remain silent about, what I have seen—whether due to prudence, or due to well-founded fear. Not only have I understood what moved men from all over the world and from ancient times. I have seen in their space and with their eyes.

This must not be confused with an escape to past epochs and remote places, as was the case, to one degree or another, with the romantics. It is likewise something different from the erudite approach to the spirit of the times by archeological, historical and ethnological inquiry.

Meanwhile, consciousness, with its ruthless shadows, has become even more acute. Consciousness therefore accompanies us towards the most remote part of the forest. This allows us to trace the contours and to classify encounters, for which the spirit, even now, was not prepared. We can even penetrate them and cross through them.

That which has supervened corroborates approach, the absent complements the present. They are found in the mirror, which dissolves time and unrest. The mirror has never been so empty, so lacking in dust and images—it is the work of two centuries. To this is added the hammering in the workshop—the curtain becomes transparent; the stage is free.

### **Parerga to *Approaches***<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> First published in 1974 in *Ensemble 5*, ed. by Clemens Graf Podewils and Heinz Piontek.

## *Cats and dogs*

Like all questions pertaining to matters of taste and even more to matters of sympathy, the dispute about who enjoys preeminence, the dog or the cat, can never be resolved. Here, deep inclinations come to light, as well as aversions. There are people, and they are not few in number, who find that just being near a cat or a dog causes them physical discomfort.

Richelieu was crazy about cats, particularly very young ones. Bismarck preferred enormous dogs. We can hardly imagine that Hitler would feel a predilection for cats; he raised German shepherds, the last of which he ordered to be poisoned before he died.

There are diverse points of view from which one may establish such a comparison. If we start from nobility, understanding by that term the preservation of one's freedom, independence and dignity, the cat undoubtedly deserves our praise. It follows no orders, it refuses all of them—except for the ones that it likes. It only responds to calls and caresses when it pleases. In fact, it is the cat that caresses us; Baudelaire saw this quite clearly, and dedicated some very beautiful verses to the cat.

“If they could bend their pride to rein or whip  
Erebus would have them for gloomy steeds.”<sup>136</sup>

In the house of masters who expect and demand service we would find ourselves, for this reason, among dogs and horses instead, and often in great numbers. This custom still survived until quite recently; today you have to travel to distant lands to find even a kennel, a stable or a falconry reserve, and even in these peripheral regions they survive almost exclusively as collectors' pieces. Horsemanship has become a sport like any other. Riding a horse is no longer a sign of power, it is not a privilege of the knightly way of life. In a dynamic epoch, the horse has less importance than the amount of horsepower that can be mobilized; its power is quantifiable.

When Pückler wrote his travel letters, East and West were still full of horses and dogs. The foxhunt represents an important theme in these letters; Pückler tells us about one of his fantastic loves, a kind of resuscitated Wild Hunter<sup>137</sup> who possessed two terrible packs of hounds: with one he hunted the fox, while the other rested. These hunting dogs, and even more the deer-hunters, devour incredible amounts of meat; to feed just one pack cost, per year, more than a thousand pounds, and this at a time when Ireland was experiencing shortages of even potatoes. The dog, especially in his largest and strongest breeds, was a regular resident of castles and palaces, as the friend of the rich and powerful, of hunters, knights and policemen; he is also found in hells and abysses. The Bible does not attribute any good things to the dog, except that he licked the sores of

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<sup>136</sup> Charles Baudelaire, “Cats”, in *The Flowers of Evil*.

<sup>137</sup> See footnote 5.

Lazarus. But he is also the loyal guardian and defender of his master and, often enough, the last to remain faithfully at his side.

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Although they were subjected to harsh criticism during his lifetime, Pückler's letters constitute a gold mine of discoveries. In Germany, elegance always arouses suspicion. Reading these letters is like walking through a masquerade dance, where the figures are hardly visible through clouds of confetti. Not only are there comical and vain features, but also grotesque and archaic ones. Corresponding to a fashion of that epoch, a quintessence or a consommé will begin every chapter, a didactic example for hack writers on the theme: "the preamble".

In the letter that discusses hunting cited above one also finds "Fox-hunt" and "Clerical fox-hunters", and, among others, "Billy, the rat-destroyer", "Colours of the days", "Anecdote told by Sir Walter Scott", "Disadvantages of a sandy soil", and also "Ride in the steam-carriage".

This "steam-carriage" constituted one of the attractions at Regents Park; it reached a speed of five miles per hour. Pückler was naturally one of the first curious observers who dared to take a ride on this train (1828). "The smell of oiled iron, which makes steamboats so unpleasant, [was] far more insufferable here." Horses and sailing ships would survive another hundred years, when they were rapidly eliminated; in this case, however, the knight's sense of smell sensed the enemy even at its very beginnings. A corresponding passage may be found in *Wilhelm Meister*, where the first whistle of the locomotive is described. That which is supervening announces its arrival.

On that very same day, the indefatigable prince also rode "the carriage drawn by kites", the invention of a British schoolteacher, which made a good impression on him. The vehicle's forward motion depended on a large kite. Pückler: "The sensation is very agreeable, for you glide over the unevennesses of the road as if carried over them.... As a country diversion, the invention is, at all events, greatly to be recommended."

The encounter of *homo ludens* with *homo faber* is fused at the margins; technology can assume ludic forms and vice versa. Freedom is fortifying; it instills life into the marionettes. The pinball machines in bars: someone puts a coin in one, launches a ball, swings at it with the *flippers*, listens to the sounds of the bells and sees the lights turning on, sees his score mount, sees the lights flash and then puts another coin in the machine. You can fly to Jupiter, win an auto race or sink ten thousand tons of shipping. They are prayer mills.

Back to cats. Being around them is good for the man who lives a tranquil and contemplative way of life. Old women love them. Rome is also home to many half-wild cats, large numbers of which have sought shelter in the Forum, in the Theater of Marcellus and in other plazas. The ruins, with their crumbling vaults, offer them a refuge. In Rome I often saw a very old woman who brought the animals a basket full of good

food. At her call they emerged from the undergrowth or from behind the ruins and columns, giving voice to meows of recognition, purring and rubbing their sinuous backs against the hand of their benefactor.

Paul Léautaud, together with his girlfriend, the “Panthère”, brought similar pleasure to the cats of the Luxembourg. They brought them meat patties from a butcher on the Rue de Seine.

The cat is better company for the man of the Muses than is the dog. He does not impede the course of thoughts, dreams and daydreams. He even favors them by way of a sphinx-like radiation. Albrecht Erich Günther, a great lover of cats, views them as household guardians that ward off demons, and he attributed their inestimable contribution to domestic tranquility to that role.

It is true that cats do not depend on people; they are not loyal like dogs. This is why slavish submission is alien to them. The name of the dog and the name of the cat can both be used as insults. This is true, in fact, for almost all domestic animals and for many other animals, in a descending line, down to the worm and the snail, and displays profound affinities *ex negativo*. As totem animals, free and powerful beasts are chosen: the lion, the bear, the buffalo, the eagle, the hawk and also the snake formed part of this group. What is surprising is that cats do not appear in the Bible, even though the Jews must have been very familiar with them, at least during their exile in Egypt, where cats were numbered among the animals that were worshipped as gods.

The cat, then, depends less on the person than on the house. It is true that humans also belong to the house. When I observe “Manda”, who has kept me company for almost four years now, including this January of 1969, I am amazed by her sense for the right place and time. In the morning she likes to come with me to the studio, because silence reigns there. The hallway is busy; in the kitchen she hears the tinkling of the silverware or the hum of the dishwasher, which she finds particularly disturbing. She could walk on the floor, but prefers furnished spaces. Most of the time she remains invisible on the seat of a chair, under the table. She values the tablecloth highly. When the sun shines into the studio, she tends to favor the windowsill; she jumps to the mantelpiece or even onto my lap, when she feels better there. It will also happen that she will lie down on her back on the floor—in this way she expresses her desire to be caressed.

Why does the pleasure of such a creature affect us so deeply, why does it provide us with such enjoyment, why does it make us so happy, in a way that operates more powerfully than its individual sympathy? It is true: look how beautiful that canine gaze is, as if he sought to discern something in our eyes, as if he were expecting to see a sign that would bridge the enormous abyss that separates us from him. But even if he were capable of understanding our language, we would not be able to answer his questions. The only dog I ever owned was a female German Shepherd; and what I found most surprising about her was the intense way that this animal knew that I was her master, despite the fact that I did not lavish a lot of attention on her. She died of distemper at the foot of my cot, in a barracks during the First World War. I sat there, suffering, as I have always suffered—



and I did not lack for reasons—when I was obliged to say goodbye. It was a silent moment, while the shadows lengthened, peacefully, almost outside of time. *Luxi* had dark brown eyes and she overwhelmed me, right up to her last breath, with her affection. In what did my merit consist? There, something took place that I can only sense and with respect to which she was closer than I was.

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The gaze of the cat is more distant and strange; his eyes are yellow like amber, blue like the sapphire, green like turquoise. Manda's eyes are of a blue color one hardly ever normally encounters in nature, either in the fish of the coral reefs or in the Bird of Paradise. Her iris reminds me of the blue of the imperial morning glory on a calm and mild morning.

Manda is the natural born mistress of the house; she accepts my affection and my service as something that is her due. Her power is great, because it is based on a beauty of which she is confident. If she could form an idea of fate, it would be one in which I would be a slave of the temple, devoted to her service. *Luxi*, on the other hand, may have considered me to be her god.

Sometimes Manda would lick my hand, but motivated by a kind of curiosity, not, undoubtedly, out of mere affection. When she does not get her way, she gives voice to disconcerting sounds, for example, when she is not fed at her usual time. She demands raw beef lungs cut into large pieces, she will reluctantly drink milk, and sometimes she will eat a small piece of fish.

Today, January 20, 1969, around midday, she has been sitting next to me since this morning, under the table, on her mat, exhausted from her nocturnal adventures. It is during these nights when kittens are engendered. When she comes home in the evening she sits at our side with her purring and her enthusiastic meows, she stretches out on her back and begins to claw the chair, until I cannot take it anymore and I let her go out. A tomcat is already waiting in the shadow of the stable. She escapes from my hands and leaps, through the snow, onto the tomcat, with a deep cooing sound. Both of them disappear into the darkness; one can hear their demoniacal activities from the garden. The cries of the Siamese cats are more frightening than the cries of the local cats. A peasant from Dorfrand, who could not sleep because of all the noise, said: "If I did not know it was your cat, I would have taken care of it." That summer he had already lost several chicks to my cat.

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There is an aura around every animal; they are quite at home in the heart of the world as much as any one of us. When I observed the chickens in the shadows of the barn floor, but also, in the full light of day, in their enthusiastic and powerful incursions into prohibited gardens, this impression is strengthened. Two years ago, I was, with Taurita, engaged in one of our excursions through an empty village in the middle of Angola. It

was around midday; the blacks were at the plantation or hunting. A handful of huts and barns bordered the village square. There, chickens were busy pecking around in the dung very silently; it was a village of animals, not of human beings.

The power of the animal is prodigious; the cosmos is hidden behind it. One could name painters and poets who even today possess free access to secrets that have long been inaccessible to theologians. What the latter discipline knows about the lamb and the dove, and also of the serpent, is nothing but a lot of allegories without any vitality or power. They remind us of the eunuch angels of paradise, where tedium reigns.

With the Jews, demystification began, not just of the gods, but also of all of nature, the mineralization of the serpent, and contempt for the summits on which the trees and the animals were the object of worship. The Christians carried on with their work.

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The cat lacks that intense and immediate sympathy towards people which is present in the dog. The latter is the escort of the active and vigilant man, above all the hunter and the herdsman—even at the most ancient campfires he must have kept man company. It is an authentic symbiosis, a very close form of living together, and also something more.

The dog participates in the expeditions and voyages of human beings. We find him both among the natives of the Tropics as well as among the Eskimos. Even feral domestic dogs hunt in packs over long distances.

The cat, on the other hand, is not an animal of the campfire, although he is one of the animals that like to sleep close to the fire. The human way of life does not influence him, although the community is his habitation; it is more like cohabitation than living together; less like symbiosis than saprophytism. What probably happened is that humans caught a kitten now and then and ended up getting used to it. Thus, at the Von Krosig farm in Libolo,<sup>138</sup> I saw a genet that had been trapped by a hunter, an animal as elegant as it is fierce which, if he is approached, will try to avoid contact and will climb on top of a cupboard or take refuge under a desk. He only allows the daughter of the house to pet him, a twelve year old girl. He will also eat from her hands. Thus, there are always human beings who overcome the differences from the undifferentiated and thanks to its internal warmth, demonstrating, in this way, their vocation for domestication. By entering into contact a magnetic attraction is generated.

I often saw the genets jumping over the trail, like shadows in whose green colors lighthouses were reflected. It is capable of crawling on the ground like a lizard; Brehm says of this creature that it seems to set a hundred joints into motion. In these genets and

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<sup>138</sup> On the colonist family of the Von Krosigs and their coffee plantations on the high plateau of Libolo, see the interesting accounts from Jünger's diaries concerning his trip to Angola, specifically Quilumbo, on October 26, 1966. Ernst Jünger, *Pasados los sesenta I*, tr. Andrés Sánchez Pascual, Tusquets Editores (Andanzas 98/3), Barcelona, 1995, p. 327.

civets, perhaps some kind of domestic animal may be concealed; the tiger-civet, most graceful of the feline-like animals, is often praised as a particularly pleasant companion.

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The dog hunts by day, the cat by night. Not only is the cat a home-loving animal, but he is totally nocturnal. His eyes, his ears, his tactile fur, his silent, elastic nature, and the fact that he sleeps by day corroborate this. He does not hunt in a pack and he does not need any guide; he feels good alone.

This is why, by his nature, the cat seeks out the company of solitary people. His taste corresponds to that other facet of the human being, leisurely, self-absorbed, poetic, imaginative and visionary. The cat has his natural place wherever the human being spends the day sleeping, not excluding the oneiric life, as I observed in Manda: sometimes, while she was sleeping, her jaw would move, as if she had caught a mouse, or her hair would stand on end, as if she was approached by a dog. Then she would give vent to a sound of profound contentment.

The cat's power is not concentrated in movement, but in tranquility; and the pleasure, the participation in well being is more profound and universal than what could be conceded by mere sympathy. Here, too, there is contact, but it not only produces heat, but the concentrated power begins to be interwoven into space and to be communicated: it is the timeless depths, free of desires, which now dawn.

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The more we accommodate ourselves to the times and allow ourselves to be swept along by its current, the farther we will be removed from that which endures. This also applies to animals; never before has so much and so little been known about them at the same time. Never before has there been such an accumulation of anatomical and ethological knowledge. Never before has so little ever been known about their salutary essence, about the intact splendor of their nature as creatures; something that myths and legends have seen as miraculous, and that forms of worship venerated as a divine quality.

A partial blindness, associated with a higher level of wisdom, distinguishes *homo faber*, whether he directs his gaze towards the stars, towards man or towards the atoms. This is the basis of his power—and naturally also his suffering, and perhaps his downfall.

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The North, the active world, melancholy, dogs and beer are mutually harmonizing, just as the South corresponds with dreams, wine, cats and Dionysian joy. We can form chains of such a kind that we can amplify them, at our whim, until they compose the molecules of organic chemistry. They are subtle affinities, but also fragile ones. We realize very quickly how we are addressing the individual case. There, nothing really exists but variants and exceptions.

For example: it is obvious that Bismarck and Hitler could only love big, strong dogs—just as Bismarck and Pückler demonstrated their sensitivity to dogs and cats. Bismarck and Hitler conducted military campaigns in France. Richelieu was crazy about cats; Clemenceau liked to be referred to as “the Tiger”. Both had waged wars against the German Empire.

Hitler’s aversion towards horses not only forms part of his nature, but is also a typical trait of the epoch, since our time is not favorable for horses. As is becoming increasingly and ominously more perceptible, our time is hostile towards animals and plants, while the role of the horse also corresponds to that of a symbol of social status. The horse is only allowed in sports, that is, wherever the character of labor has penetrated even into play and games. It survives in the same way as the sailing ship.

Hitler decimated the aristocracy and would have exterminated it if he had enough time. He would have preferred to conduct the war without officers, with only technicians and functionaries. His secret infiltration of Political Commissars into the army was a first step in this direction.

A young soldier who returned from Narvik told me that there, on a certain occasion, they needed a bolt for an artillery piece. When Hitler heard about this, he immediately called the warehouse where such a bolt could be obtained. Something like that makes a big impression on technicians.

Just as he disliked horses, Hitler also felt an aversion for beer. Even the smell of people who had been drinking beer, he found disagreeable; this aversion was based, in turn, on his strict vegetarianism, which largely presupposed a particular sensitivity. This quality conferred an advantage on him, insofar as it warned him of dangers and allowed him to avoid assassination attempts. There is information about the changes he made in his itineraries and his long-established plans that showed how high-strung he was. There was no lack of hysterical traits. The mother image is surprising; a model example of the lunar and sleepwalking type. Then there is the father, like a drill sergeant.

“When that old man looked at me with his one eye, he seemed to me to be a complete stranger”: this was a precocious assessment of Stauffenberg. When he appeared alone, for example, when reviewing troops, he tried to cover his private parts, either with his hat or with his hands. A trait that is obvious in many photos. A defect, even a castration complex, might be suggested. It appears that his corpse was even subjected to a detailed autopsy, despite the abundant gasoline used to cremate it. He had in common with Sade the desire to leave no trace behind him after his death; and although both had quite different motives, there is a point of contact.

The sensitive part belongs to the sense of smell; the nauseated sneer, which consists in curling one’s upper lip and which is shared by many great persecutors—Stalin, Beria, Himmler and others.

Chaplin did not need to make faces to play the role of the dictator: both are contemporaries, almost born on the same day. This is the key to his bashfulness. From the sublime to the ridiculous, as also from the ridiculous to the horrible, there is only one step. Of course, Chaplin is the more potent, the more radical. Laughter, too, can shatter foundations and bring down walls. Hitler set the fire, and Chaplin brought fuel to the fire, even dynamite.

This constitutes a separate topic. Here we should only point out that the classification by types such as “dogs and cats” only establishes crude differences. In the case of Bismarck we would have to add the bear, and in that of Clemenceau, the rooster. In this way, increasingly more subtle differentiations are required to characterize the individual. This situation was more simple when one still trusted in and relied on the totem and on this basis made distinctions. When consciousness was powerful it did not need to fall back on characters, but on types; it celebrated festivities where it experienced not only similarity, but identity, with the animal.

This unity has been lost for a long time; one of the symptoms is the absence of plants and animals on seals and flags, as well as the disappearance of the *Fleur de lis* and the eagle from standards and heraldry. The fact that this is a loss is a fact that is recognizable by the vehemence of the nostalgia that follows in its wake. The search is urgent, the rediscovery, even if only by way of a detour through Mexico.

### ***On gambling***

If we can believe Tacitus, the Germans would stake, and lose, their own homes, wives and children while gambling. In any event, right up to our time they have dissipated in card games not only patrimonies, but also inheritances. In the hosts of Cortez there was a soldier who “staked the Sun in a card game”, referring to a strange idol that had fallen to his lot in the division of the loot after a temple was pillaged. The goods acquired by warriors, pirates and gamblers are not destined to be in their possession for very long. On the playing table, the bets pile up with a dizzying speed; in one night prodigious sums are won and lost. The game creates addiction; it is similar to those forms of intoxication whose excitation is based on greed.

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As a result of the French Revolution, gambling stakes were raised to new heights and the outcome was often disastrous. This phenomenon has also found an expression in literature; in Balzac, for example, in his description of the Parisian gambling dens. In the London clubs, games with dangerously high stakes figured among the opportunities for a dandy to exhibit his cold-bloodedness. In this respect, Wellington was no exception.

High-stakes gambling is one of the symptoms that characterize the decline of the aristocracy. “At bottom”, the root has begun to rot, but in the kaleidoscope of history, the impression arises that the axe has struck the trunk, and, undoubtedly, due to suspicious

existences that have flourished in society. Casanova mentions a man named Schwerin who pawned the *Pour la Merité* of an illustrious ancestor.

Such things will always happen. In every flock there is a black sheep, in every family a prodigal son. The tendency of such things to appear more frequently is not a fact that can be verified statistically. Anyone who is interested in genealogical contexts in the manner of Vehse, in family trees and biographies, will find that, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the alienation of patrimonies increased and so did marriage for love.

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For many vocations, imprudence is indispensable; it is an existential precondition for their performance. Among soldiers, those belonging to light cavalry regiments, especially hussars, have since time immemorial been famous for their hot tempers. Their mission was to demoralize, to spy on, and to attack and ambush the enemy. They participate in “skirmishes” (*plänkeln*)—a word that is related to “flash” (*blinken*).<sup>139</sup> The classic charge, the decisive blow reserved to the cavalry, who fought with cuirasses and went into battle with swords held horizontally. They constituted the preferred personal guard of the prince.

Tolstoy sketched the figure of the light cavalryman, with his light and shadow, in *The Two Hussars*; Kleist also introduced him in his stories. The surprise attack of the hussar involved the rapid seizure of loot, bold charges, reckless gambles. He liked to bet everything on a *single* card.

The hussar’s affinity with populations of nomadic horsemen is reflected not only his equipment, but also in his physiognomy. One could imagine Zieten among the Pandurs.<sup>140</sup> In many regiments, it was precisely ugliness that was valued.

The dazzling element of ambiguity is also present wherever these horsemen erupt into universal history. Blücher, whom Napoleon called the “drunken hussar” and for whom even Léon Bloy professed admiration, preserved his sanguinary temperament until an advanced age. His tenacity in remaining in contact with and attacking the enemy, exemplified above all in the Battle of Waterloo, could take on demoniacal features, which evoke the “Wild Hunt”.<sup>141</sup> It is reminiscent of the panting dog hot on the trail of the fleeing prey. Sometimes, he did not seem to be in his right mind and he imagined that he was an elephant that was the cause of so much devastation. Naturally, he was also a

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<sup>139</sup> In fact, it is related to the word from the Middle High German, *blenkeln*, that is, “to beat the drum”. *Blinken* means to emit reflections or to glitter, to warn with intermittent light, or to blink.

<sup>140</sup> Pandurs: a name for various specialized military, police or militia units in the northwestern Balkans (Austria-Hungary, Croatia, Dalmatia) during the 1700s and the 1800s [American translator’s note].

<sup>141</sup> *Die Wilde Jagd*, in Germanic mythology, the army of spirits, the souls of the dead who ride to the assault.

compulsive gambler and also a bad risk when it came to paying his debts, besides; there are still families that have kept IOUs with his signature, which have remained unpaid.

Blücher, who ran away from home when he was still a teenager to enlist in the Swedish hussars, was not an educated man; his strong suit was not knowledge, but character and temperament. His toast at Wellington's diplomatic table, "May the pens of the diplomats not again spoil all that the swords of our brave armies have so gloriously won!", remained proverbial for a long time. People with such gifts seldom lack that natural flair that enables them to hit the nail on the head, as Blücher did in many of his sayings. Thus, for example, the following saying concerning the Prussians, written after 1815, when he returned from a health spa, with his health in tatters: "The State does not possess a constitution that is any healthier than mine; in war we remain fresh, in peace no one wants to walk on his own two legs".

Zieten knew how to engage in brilliant repartee, in general his lives are more accessible. Insolent speech is characteristic of the soldier of the light cavalry; both Zieten and Blücher were expelled by Frederick due to their arrogance, but they were also readmitted to the service. The great leader of cavalry troops in the Seven Years War was Seydlitz; he got his start in the cuirassiers.

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Dangerous traits rise to the surface in civil wars and similar situations. Then the hussar can arrive on the scene, playing the role of the type who does not pull any punches. He is quick to hang or shoot, like Blücher when he had to deal with the Saxons who mutinied in Lütich, when the news was announced from the Congress of Vienna that their country would be partitioned. Just before the executions were to be carried out, the Prussian general Borstell hesitated for reasons of conscience and was dismissed. He was, it is true, an old cuirassier.

Gallifet also faithfully represented this type, with his jagged and rough way of life. In his name the song of the "rooster" was played on the trumpet, which, at the gates of Sedan, summoned the cavalry to its last famous charge. It was said that one could even smell the gunpowder smoke on the bodies of the fallen.

Memories that would have annihilated a man of the stature of Borstell, would obviously not even have been a major burden for Gallifet. "*Voilà l'assassin*"—this is how he was later presented as the Minister of War in the legislative chamber. He displays some Mexican traits, including memories of the brutal massacre of Sebastopol, the model for the future battles of materiel. Rochefort, in his journal, *Laterne*, the model of all those weeklies bound in red cloth which were as blunt as a bullet, recounts a dangerous encounter with Gallifet. The man of letters escaped by a hair from the man who did not pull any punches. The behavior of Gallifet in the Dreyfus Case, which earned him the hatred of the conservatives, was, in this sense, atypical.

It is undoubtedly fair to say that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, generals were effectively under control, with the exception of South America. Monarchs or Parliaments held the reins. Now, generals are taking the reins everywhere, and not only in Africa. Where arguments are no longer convincing, it is but one step from the *terrible simplificateurs* to the *simplificateurs terribles*. Tolstoy, who was familiar with the characters of war and peace, provides some details. A colonel in a front line regiment, who had fascinated a young officer at a dinner party due to his modest humanity, shocked him on the following morning, by virtue of the zeal with which he watched a sentence of corporal punishment being carried out.

It is understandable that along with horses and horsemen, so too has gambling, in its old forms, fallen into disuse. The father to whom the son confesses his gambling debts has disappeared even as a character in novels. Likewise, the son who shoots himself in the head or washes dishes in America, because he abided by his word of honor. “Gambling debts are debts of honor”—a rhetorical flourish which has caused much misfortune, but which has now lost all its value.

On the gaming table, fate is cheapened; these days, the “word of honor” is an expression whose value has fallen to rock bottom prices. Everything becomes cheapened to the extent that it is reckoned in numbers. At the end of the [nineteenth] century, however, unfortunate incidents still abounded and so did the trials that followed in their wake.

### ***Power and patrimony—Circulation and capital***

Money in motion produces stratification, money immobilized produces concentration. Here, a qualitative difference is manifested, that is, a difference between mechanical increase and organic growth. It is not enough to increase the balance in a savings account to create a patrimony. From a quantitative point of view, a patrimony can be small, even as paltry as that of a petty bondholder in Munich on the eve of the First World War. Its value is not concealed behind numbers, but in the leisure and, contrary to all acceleration, the peaceful security that it concedes. Perhaps one can enjoy oneself more in a small garden than in a spacious park, even when its cultivation does not exclude hard work.

A dynamic society stratifies, although not in accordance with its patrimony, but in accordance with the income that is conceded by the power of possession. The latter for its part redounds to the benefit of hyperactivity—the possession of a greater quantity of power, the abolition of space by way of telecommunications, capital in general, a process that is also forwarded by investment. Advertising belongs to this tendency; the importance of a book is not estimated by its value, but by the number produced.

One must also consider the fact that the power of possession is not always in the hands of those who have obtained some income and deserve it. Its power can also be transformed into the capacity for administration. There is a rude awakening that is characteristic of those mornings after triumphant revolutions. When the time came for redistribution, certain types appeared who had not fought on the fronts or on the barricades. Behind the



liquidation of the first uniform is concealed a kind of legality, perhaps even a kind of reason. The matter acquires a more frightening aspect, when we note the fates of every one of the exceptional personalities, for example, the fate of the Social Revolutionaries, before and after the October Revolution.

### ***Prussians and war***

Their fondness for war forms part of the black legend of the Prussians. In fact, however, the disorder of war instills them with an instinctive fear. Compared to Louis XIV, the Great Elector of Brandenburg is a normal monarch, and Frederick is the brilliant exception. In his old age he regressed to the type and was incorporated into the popular consciousness as “Old Man” Fritz, not under the aspect of a young man in blue armor, as he was depicted by Pesne.

They are more soldiers than warriors, they are fanatics of order—order must “prevail” in the economic and social fields, and the military field, naturally, as the preferred field, because at the front order is concretized in a synoptic model. Frederick Wilhelm I is the original Prussian; he represented the type right down to the smallest details. Having become involved, against his will, in the Nordic conflicts of Charles XII, he did not, at the time, fight any war, despite the fact that there was no lack of good opportunities.

The reason why the Prussians do not love war is their mistrust of the elemental forces; they create disorder. They esteem synoptic frameworks: the State as a large estate, the order of the armory. The failure of their firing line formation tactic was a catastrophe for them. At Valmy, just as on the Marne, their nerve failed them. *Nolentem trahunt*—there is a secret power of history that acts by retarding the pace of events; Goethe had seen it *in situ* more clearly than the generals.

Frederick Wilhelm II was neither a soldier nor, by the way, an eminent military tactician; he was a weak character, but one with an enigmatic personality, as the excellent portrait by Anton Graff has captured so well. Frederick Wilhelm III had to be led to war like a dog to the hunt. “Whatever I said”, he was still capable of saying even in 1813, when he had already experienced a few setbacks. He opposed the autonomy of York, although the latter injected new life into the monarchy. Frederick Wilhelm IV allowed major opportunities with regard to domestic and foreign policy to slip through his hands. The “Pan-German Solution” was one such opportunity. The imperial crown emitted, in his view, the “carrion odor of the revolution”.

The title of emperor made Wilhelm I think of himself as a kind of “moral commander”. He, under whose reign only successful wars were waged and who was a good monarch, demonstrates typical Prussian traits: enthusiasm is foreign to him, and even repugnant. When, after 1864, the victorious regiments put roses into the barrels of their rifles, he displayed his outrage; likewise, when Hohenlohe presented himself in 1870, in a helmet that had been grazed by a bullet at the battle of Sedan. When, after Saint Privat, he saw a fallen hussar in a red uniform on the square, he realized that the dead soldier’s coat was still in good condition—someone should take it to the quartermaster’s storeroom. The

saying attributed to a Prussian sergeant, “It’s time to put an end to the Jesieje”, was on the mark, like every good anecdote, in expressing the heart of things.

They do not like volunteers. Their inclination to gamble is strong, but only slightly developed; it is directed towards automatic perfection. The march of the guard at Potsdam exhibits an almost unreal character, which has not gone unnoticed by intelligent travelers from other countries. No deep ancestral lineage, a small native land, but much State and homeland. Perhaps this has determined their sober judgment in questions of power, which distinguished the Prussians in their best times. Hitler had to remove them from the administration and the army, before he could do just as he wished. From the beginning there was mutual antipathy between them.

Wilhelm II, who enjoyed in a romantic and almost literary way the terror that emanated from fortifications and weaponry, became almost invisible during the war. That war was not for him a means like the cavalry charges or the great sea battles of the past. Waldersee, Bülow, the younger Moltke—in personal matters he had, unlike his grandfather, a bad hand. The aspiration was shifted to the phenotype, from being to appearance.

It is not impossible that he will be rehabilitated. It is probable that, like Frederick Wilhelm IV, he was too gifted for a job in which intelligence mattered less than character and charisma.

It is inevitable that we should compare him with King Gunther and Hamlet. Perhaps some day he will be understood as a tragic figure. This claim is not so bold since it can be applied to any man, but almost always we lack a Shakespeare, or at least a Georg Büchner, to reveal what was hidden behind the mask.

What the Prussians have been reproached for is not so much their warlike spirit, as their resistance to time and its transformative power. They were the last stronghold of obstinate opponents of progress to dissolve in Europe. If one thinks of what came after them and what, perhaps, is yet to come—maybe then we will judge the suspicion under which they have fallen differently.

### ***Books and readers***

Among the monuments of the imaginary city, there must be one that the unknown reader dedicated to the anonymous author, as a display of gratitude for the genius that helped him to achieve a second, more buoyant existence. In any case, it almost seems to me as if, during the long road we have traveled, that we have lived more intensely in books than in our interval of time. I did not travel from Leipzig to Halle, but from one chapter to another. Between them was the rhythmic, tedious banging, and the monotony of railroad ties and rails lined by telegraph poles, the emptiness of the technological world. That is the way it was when I was in school, and then in the army—a life in installments.

The palace of the reader is more durable than any other. It survives peoples, cultures, religions, even languages. Earthquakes and wars do not shatter its foundations, nor is it threatened by the burning of libraries like the one at Alexandria. Markets, villages of *fellahin*, colossi, skyscrapers, countries and islands grow until they disappear into the sky, as if the rain will always water them. Reality is enchanted; dream becomes a reality. The door is open to the magical world. I think that I have already mentioned the Mandarin who wandered into a line of criminals awaiting execution, profoundly absorbed in a book, while ahead of him in line the decapitations proceeded. Most of the time, the reader is engrossed, but not because he is incapable of dealing with his environment, but rather because he considers it to be of minor importance. And this is the way it is, above all when the world lowers the price and what it supplies is diminished in value.

Fontane's *Irrungen, Wirrungen* has left an indelible mark on my memory. I can recall details of its contents more precisely than I can recall the details of the day when I was first introduced to the story. It was the day when the Otago-Rifles arrived, fresh as a daisy, from New Zealand, to fight against us, and the mutual exchange of machine gun and artillery fire commenced. During the pauses I returned to the lakes of the Mark in the crisis of 1870.

I began to read *The Thousand and One Nights*—that unfading gift of the magical world to the West—when I was nine years old, in June 1904; that month I had found the book on the table, a birthday present from my mother. It was Gustav Weil's translation in four volumes, which always offered me refuge, again and again, like an oasis in a desert, until I passed on to reading Littmann's translation in twelve volumes. The stories were deeply etched in my memory, as were the images from the richly illustrated edition. Now I have come to feel these sensations in Taroudant, in a Moroccan city that, despite its proximity to the coast, still exhibits a strong Eastern imprint.

*The Thousand and One Nights*: the model of authorship that is both collective and anonymous. The work could be the invention of a demon—constructed overnight like one of those fantastic palaces. We should also think of the mother-of-pearl of a seashell—a cerebral trace that has hardened with iridescent incrustations.

### ***Illness and demonic power<sup>142</sup>—News about Walter's misfortune***

Illnesses come and go; they appear and disappear like comets, after having caused calamities. Thus, malaria, whose power is now limited, but not eradicated. As an illness of the swamps it is now receding. A doctor, Ernst Thonnard, devoted a study to it about thirty years ago, one that went beyond the bounds of his discipline.

Great epidemics are like wars, although it is difficult to separate them spatially and temporally. Their victims are just as numerous, but anonymous. The “nameless”

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<sup>142</sup> In German, *Dämonie* does not designate satanic power so much as power that is dangerous because of its unpredictable nature. Thus, for example, it is frequently used in expressions such as the *Dämonie der Technik*.

designates an ensemble of powers that are hard to recognize and to endure. They can manifest themselves, often almost imperceptibly, like great political powers that have developed neither armaments nor armies. Malaria ended with the Crusades, sieges and pilgrimages to Rome. Five German emperors died of malaria in Italy. The Indians were familiar with it; they had already called it “the queen of maladies” three thousand years ago.

Dreams, ecstatic intoxication and fevers were related to one another; their home is the swamps. The rise in the temperature of the blood by two or three degrees is sufficient to open the doors to a new world of images; the feverish patient begins to dream, as if his spirit had drawn open a curtain for him. Life becomes more passive on the outskirts of his airless lowest depths; existence adopts vegetative traits.

More than one sick person recovers his health reluctantly. The Greeks believed that the lotus and the water lily flourished in the swamps, under the light of the Moon, which disappears with the dawn. They told how the Nymph, Lotus, had metamorphosed into this flower, when Priam was pursuing her. Among the Indians, Lakshmi, the goddess who was the daughter of the ocean and the night, rows over the abyss of time in a lotus petal.

The Lotus Eaters, inhabitants of the swamps that produced their food, had gained fame as sleepers for having lost their memory, without affliction. In Book Nine of the *Odyssey* Homer describes the encounter of the Greeks with this people of a benevolent, but dangerous, spirit. Odysseus had dispatched two explorers to the heart of the island, accompanied by a herald:

“... and they had a third man under them. They started at once, and went about among the Lotus-eaters, who did them no hurt, but gave them to eat of the lotus, which was so delicious that those who ate of it left off caring about home, and did not even want to go back and say what had happened to them, but were for staying and munching lotus with the Lotus-eaters without thinking further of their return....”<sup>143</sup>

This depicts one of the most ancient encounters with vegetative contentment, even with the temptation of addiction, that can be found in the history of political consciousness and responsibility. Odysseus, who always had a remedy, opted for a disintoxication cure: he ordered the men to be captured and forced them to sober up, tying them to the benches of the ship.

Palus: swamp, stagnant water—the word is also applicable as a name for the Stygian lake, Avernus. The swamp is an intermediate realm, neither land nor water, miasmatic and shadowy. Malaria is bad air, unhealthy just like the name of that illness that leads to an early death or to a lethargic existence. It is interwoven with the fate of the European

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<sup>143</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, IX, translated by Samuel Butler (1900).

not only in the tropical colonies, but even on the margins of his own continent. Energy is extinguished, the quantity of red blood cells is diminished.

Children born with malaria waste away; many die immediately after they are born. I saw them, delicate and pale like starved buds, during my first visits to Cerdeña. Naturally, the islanders had obtained some relative insurance against it at least by “pre-immunization”—the expression is derived from the theory of tuberculosis and means protection by re-infection with the organism. Resistance has been acquired over the course of generations, as an inherited advantage. The power of the disease has been attenuated, little by little, like that of a wave that goes to die on the surface of the beach. The foreigner does not enjoy this advantage. The Roman official who moved to Cerdeña expected to last for three years; his coffin was shipped along with his baggage.

Even in our century there were neighborhoods in Rome where, during the dog days of summer, malaria came; a walk through the foreigners’ cemetery near the Pyramid of Cestius is instructive in this regard. In Baedeker’s Guide it is recommended that one should keep one’s windows closed when the train is passing through the countryside.

The great era of the swamps passed when the birds and the mammals arrived and the number of volcanoes declined. Skin and plumage now had to supply what the earth had provided in the past from its own bosom. Food was abundant in the warm lands, where dragons and monsters lived, and above all the serpent, as a symbol of the power of life that also embraced death. It lay under the great hemlock or on the dead roots of the mangrove, bathed in the light of a pale sun.

The swamp is hostile to consciousness and history, but not to the life force. In the swamp there are neither ancestors nor heroes nor complex organizations. For history, with its consciousness of time, to be able to proceed, it was necessary that first the heroes should drain the swamps and clear the land. Cultivation followed them into the gullies and ravines, after they killed the monsters that lived there. This is merely one example of the great transformations that spread over the sea and the mountains; the brilliant light came with Aries—as a solar sign it dissolves the sign of Taurus, whose nature is entirely telluric.

Heracles, Theseus and Moses founded new laws and new orders; Heracles cleaned the Augean Stables with the current from two rivers, Theseus defeated the Minotaur, and Moses punished the worship of the Golden Calf as sacrilege. The Argonauts, who had taken the Golden Fleece as booty and yoked the bull to the plow, are primordial Aries—Alexander was the last, and with his death the mythical world disappears.

Swamps still exist, but even in the Amazon basin highways have been built. Malaria still claims its victims, and its somber toll cannot even be calculated. However, it is possible to halt its spread, as is also the case with the other great epidemics. The microscope, and also advances in the fields of chemistry, pharmacology and zoology, as well as in trade and administration, offer their help to medicine. The doubling of the European population

in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is explained above all by the decrease in the infant mortality rate, to which the anti-malarial fight also made its contribution.

Disease not only generates symptoms, but it also adopts a figure. It not only has causes and occasions, but also a domain and a system. It can remain totally or temporarily latent, without manifesting any symptoms. It only merits the name of disease when the sick person responds. There is an infinite number of protozoa; many are harmless, others are dangerous or very dangerous, while others are indispensable and beneficial. But even the very dangerous ones only become active when the *physis* accepts them and responds to them. It is on the basis of this observation that some methods and prescriptions are based, above all on the margins of mainstream medicine. But regardless of the remedies that might be adopted, whether tactical or strategic, against the disease—it is the sick person who is still its servant or its master. Success, that is, a cure, is the authentic fruit of sovereign activity, which the sick person is capable of opposing to his suffering.

The great epidemics of the past were viewed as personifications; they threatened like clouds of locusts, old crones, pale horsemen; earthquakes and comets announced their arrival. The little man of the plague brought the Black Death from the forest in his hat.

Not only do diseases, as such, constitute a whole, but so does illness as an evil that spans the ages. Only the type and arena of the attacks vary. In the world of labor they are strictly associated with the *tempo* that exhausts the heart and the nerves and increases the number of heart attacks. And poisoning must also be taken into account. Now that the plague has been vanquished, infestation is on the rise. It is impossible to completely safeguard oneself from it—the poison is concealed in the air and in the water, it rises from the earth and gets into our food. It comes in the form of radiation, drugs and medicine, and is not restricted to material things.

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Armin Müller, himself one of those doctors who, like Goethe, observed diseases in the sense of the intuitive contemplation of nature, speaks of the “demonic character” of syphilis. This affects the person who has had bad luck in the lottery we all play.

Demonic power is concealed in every illness; in this sense, one cannot but agree that the primitive peoples were right. This trait is particularly evident in afflictions like rabies, to which Armin Müller also devoted an enlightening study. What is peculiar in syphilis is the moral effect, from which not even educated doctors have been immune; the treatment began with a sermon. The causal nexus between blame and pain, divine punishment “even to the third and fourth generation”, is in this case an example of methods of pedagogical intimidation.

This was the center of gravity of Walter’s anxiety. Back then, I told him: “Desert to the front, go to the first line trenches, do not have the least doubt that Oppen—who was the colonel—will not make you go home.”

To which he responded: “I thought about it. But to fall in combat, it is necessary to have been purified.”

Every illness can be viewed in the light of morality, and therefore it can be related to a sin or, at least, to a fault—this is something that was accepted as true in the times of our first fathers. “Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?” Thus, in Job 4, and then in Chapter 24: “Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.”

Disease is an evil and is also contagious. The more serious it is, the more the sick person is viewed with mistrust. In his account of the plague in London, Defoe provides examples of such attitudes. The horror, and even the repugnance, have been preserved in tasteless expressions: “That kind of person has the plague in his body.”

The sick person is bothersome, and often dangerous; he has to be isolated. However, the triumphant entry of the disease cannot be prevented—*King Pest*, one of Edgar Allan Poe’s stories, describes this triumph that ridicules all preparations.

The “sandalwood captains”, adventurers who in the last century sailed the southern seas in search of that valuable wood, often rid themselves of their sick crewmen in a particularly brutal way. Usually, the natives, when they found them on the beach, were more humane and tried to help them. The natives were themselves, however, decimated by the contagion; sometimes, even the most resistant elements were exterminated.

Elsewhere, I have already mentioned an experience that my father had when he was a young man, in 1892. I am referring to it again here because it is a useful illustration. One morning he was walking past the central train station in Hannover when a traveler left the station and walked across the Ernst-August Square. He had only just noticed this stranger when he heard an apprentice shout, “He is from Hamburg!”. I must also point out that, at the time, in 1892, Germany underwent its last wave of cholera in the city of Hamburg.

It was obvious to him that he had discovered a new insult. The shouted warning made my father think. It was a milestone in his development, which despite his benevolence towards the individual, was distinguished by a scepticism towards the species. Observations, experiences and disappointments had condensed in his person until they formed an anti-Rousseauian system; to him the human being was suspect right from the start. He was therefore only doing what many other people commonly did; what was peculiar about him was only the fact that he did not try to hide it. In the stranger whom we meet on an island, in a desert or even in the forest, on the outskirts of a big city, what is manifested to us, in the first place, is the species—we feel mistrust. Even as children we were warned not to trust strangers.

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I would like to explain the word, *Aussatz* (“leprosy”), as a term that causes an *Ausschlag* (“rash”) to be *pendant*—something that precipitates (*sich niederschlagen*) or crystallizes (*sich ansetzen*). First of all, strange spots or discolorations are found on the skin. Etymologists trace the word back to *aussetzen* (“to expose [oneself] to a danger, to stick one’s neck out, to give up”). This is illuminating, but language does not generally work in such a roundabout way. *Lepis* is the scale, *lepra* the disease that makes the skin squamous.

Lepers were effectively abandoned to the elements. They lived in special leper colonies to keep them away from the populated areas, and in these colonies they had their own chapels and cemeteries. Before they passed on to a better life, they were thrown out by the community as if they were already dead. It was thought that the very blood of lepers poisoned wells; in their travels they had to announce their presence with a bell or a rattle. When they bought something at the market, they had to put their coins in a bowl full of vinegar, as was customary during plagues.

The unnerving sound of the rattles of the lepers was familiar, and almost proverbial, in medieval cities. “There is a grating sound, as if the lepers were shaking their rattles all at once” (Ulrich Kraft in one of his sermons, Ulm, 1503). Even in Wilde we hear him speak of the “lepers who lived in the marshes”.

Leprosy, one of the horrors of the Middle Ages, only survives today in the peripheries, and will soon only exist in the history of medicine. The great diseases follow their courses, like cultures; they are born, they flourish, they reign for a long time and finally they are extinguished. Their disappearance is almost as strange as their first appearance—a gigantic fish that submerges again after having brought misfortune.

Fear does not go under along with the disease, however. It spreads to other fields, it changes its object. It is not very highly developed in cases of paralysis, it is somewhat developed with tuberculosis, and it is very highly developed with cancer and heart disease. Heart disease is accompanied by intense stress. They are variations on the true melody, of “The Winds of Death Are Blowing”, as it says in the song.

The terrors of the “Neapolitan Evil” have also passed into history; it was a long road from the malady of Ulrich von Hutten, who succumbed to the disease after eleven mercury treatments, to Maupassant, in whose *Horla* the oncoming footsteps of madness and the horror it evokes resound.

This is very remote from the solid beginnings of a Rabelais and his “Venereal Venus”. In general, when we read Goncourt’s diaries, we get the impression that the literary coterie that was then making its debut had been transformed precisely into a sumptuous dessert for this evil, whose voracity has since declined. It then moves to the nerves, and emits will-o’-the-wisps throughout the *fin de siècle*, whose consciousness and artistic delicacy confer a sinister phosphorescence on the disease. The horror is encountered in Verlaine and his followers, in Rops and Murger, and also in Dehmel: “We are the plague of lust and death.” The horrors of leprosy have been lost, in their place we have this anxiety with



its nervous complications. In a restaurant, Edmond de Goncourt saw how the gastronomical habits of his brother had become vulgar; he pointed it out. Jules broke into tears. Then Edmond could not contain his tears, either.

Research is not unanimous with respect to the case of Nietzsche; the only thing that is certain is that Overbeck, after the attack, found certain medicines in the apartment of his friend in Turin.

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If we fail to contemplate illness as a power, and, certainly, as an autonomous magnitude with its own course and, perhaps, also with its own purposes in the overall framework, then we will never understand it in its totality, but only in its details, from the perspective of our time. Not only does it show itself in diverse forms depending on the legion of illnesses and the populations it afflicts, but it is also revealed in the era itself. This is just as applicable to illness as it is to the response of the sick person. It is not by chance that we use the word “afflict(ion)” to mean either a state of affairs, or an activity.

Thus, for example, Walter’s states of anxiety were typical of the epoch. A few years before, they could not possibly have taken that form, for anxieties of that kind had to be preceded by the application of light into a dark domain in microscopic technique. We get an incomplete view of it, if we interpret it only as a relation of cause and effect. The entry into a new state of consciousness not only modifies optics—it would then be necessary to understand the concept in a more comprehensive way.

Undoubtedly, fear must grow as our optical instruments are perfected by way of selection. This involves correspondences; with such technical equipment we are capable of seeing at a greater distance, even what is hidden in a drop of water. Bloy attributes the invention of means of high speed transport to fear. Back then no one was talking about rockets. Human ingenuity must have a premonition of situations where life depends on the possibility of reaching a distant continent within a few hours.

The heart of time and of the times resists vision, but there are always surprises with respect to the simultaneity of phenomena separated by enormous distances. Shortly before the French Revolution, Herschel discovered Uranus. Without that planet, no horoscope is complete—just as no political prediction is fully meaningful without knowledge of the French Revolution. Even the name of this planet is food for thought. The same thing happened with the latest planet, Pluto, which in 1930 was more the object of calculations than observations. Are they nothing more than names, suggestions, random events?

It is worthwhile watching how a seed develops its particular image when it grows: a canker sore, a tumor of the pituitary gland, certain forms of megalomania. An infection that destroys one organism, can compensate for a defect in another. A bout of fever unveils worlds of unusual images. Then, an illness of the spirit produces never before

suspected fluorescence, a brilliant eruption. But of what then happens we perceive only crude symptoms. Sight hardly goes beyond the cross-section cut of the microtome.

This is the way of plant colonies. A seed or a spore has approached and develops a flower or one of the colored images from the dermatology manual, a lupus in the form of a butterfly. A virus, in the form of a cold, goes almost unnoticed in one child, while in his brother it causes lifelong paralysis.

However much our knowledge of diseases grows, the sick person asks, correctly, what precisely does all of this have to do with him. That is a whole different matter. John F. Kennedy, who had suffered much, said: "Life is unfair. Some people are sick and others are well." This is just as correct as the assertion that not everyone becomes the President of the United States. And once again, the question arises: how many chance, almost unbelievable, events had to converge for the bullet that was fired at him to hit the target with such fateful necessity? "No!", his wife shouted when he fell on her—it is the first word that is imposed on us when we are faced with such misfortune.

Furthermore, a death of this kind shakes the foundation of consciousness, and not only in the field of political power. It also summons into the arena all those spirits who are interested in astrology and numerology or who know how to recognize patterns and strange coincidences in certain historical periods. They suspect hidden connections, but they do not penetrate into the authentic deep meaning of the magical conjurations. Spilled blood harbors a power that is not susceptible to representation. The fact that some murders, such as, for example, the one that took place at Sarajevo, entail unforeseeable consequences, is neither more nor less surprising than the fact that a child can set fire to a city with a match. But the ardent power of blood offered in sacrifice has always been known. Then it becomes beneficial to feed the fire.

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One must add to illness something typical, something hidden in the heart of nature. Hence the interpretation of the signs poses questions that touch upon both fate and responsibility. In hygiene this is secularized. Krause went to Calcutta and brought smallpox with him. He had not been vaccinated. A criminal case.